

A BEHAVIOURAL MODEL FOR FOOD TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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DOCTORAL THESIS

**A BEHAVIOURAL MODEL FOR FOOD TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS
OF EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

PIMSUPORN POYOI

2023



DOCTORAL THESIS

**A BEHAVIOURAL MODEL FOR FOOD TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS
OF EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Compendium of publications

Pimsuporn Poyoi

2023

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN TOURISM

Supervised by:

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Presented to obtain the degree of PhD at the University of Girona



Dr. Lluís Coromina Soler and Dra. Ariadna Gassiot Melian, of Universitat de Girona,

WE DECLARE:

That the thesis entitled “A behavioural model for food tourism: an analysis of experiences on social media”, presented by Pimsuporn Poyoi to obtain a doctoral degree, has been completed under our supervision.

For all intents and purposes, we hereby sign this document.

Signatures

Dr. Lluís Coromina Soler

Dra. Ariadna Gassiot Melian

Girona, 8th January 2024

List of publications derived from the doctoral thesis

This doctoral thesis, entitled “A behavioural model for food tourism: an analysis of experiences on social media”, is a compendium of publications comprising three articles following the same line of research. These publications have been previously accepted or sent to the respective journals and their quality indexes are indicated below.

Article 1: Published

Title: Local food experiences before and after COVID-19: A sentiment analysis of eWOM

Authors: Poyoi, P., Gassiot-Melian, A., & Coromina, L.

Journal, volume and issue: Tourism and Hospitality Management, 29(4)

SJR (2022): Impact Factor: 0.340. Q2 (Geography, planning and development) (Ranking 371/785). Q3 (Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management) (Ranking 90/139). H-Index: 19.

JCR ESCI (2022): JIF: 1.3. JCI: 0.380. Q3 (Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism) (Ranking 86/135).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.29.4.1>

Article 2: Under review

Title: Exploring travellers' motivations for sharing food experiences online

Authors: Poyoi, P., Coromina, L., & Gassiot-Melian, A.

Journal: Academica Turistica – Tourism & Innovation Journal

SJR (2022): Impact Factor: 0.205. Q3 (Social Sciences – Miscellaneous) (Ranking 417/696). Q4 (Management of Technology and Innovation) (Ranking 214/275). Q4 (Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management) (Ranking 114/139). H-Index: 5. Submission date: 6th September 2023

Article 3: Under review

Title: Sharing food experiences on social media: A cross-generational comparison between Millennials and Gen Z

Authors: Poyoi, P., Gassiot-Melian, A., & Coromina, L.

Journal: Journal of Food Products Marketing

SJR (2022): Impact Factor: 0.466. Q2 (Business and International Management) (Ranking 183/442). Q2 (Food Science) (Ranking 143/359). Q3 (Marketing) (Ranking 107/212). H-Index: 34.

JCR ESCI (2022): JCI: 0.55. Q3 (Business) (Ranking 160/301).

Submission date: 5th September 2023

Additional Publication

Poyoi, P., Gassiot-Melian & Coromina, L. (2022). The role of local food in tourists' behavior: a structural equation modelling approach. *Journal of Tourism Analysis*, 29(2), 118–155.

List of Participations in conferences, colloquiums and workshops

PATA webinar: “The role of mart tourism & smart cities in recovery and development”, organised by the Pacific Asia Travel Association, 18th February 2021.

ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group Meeting “Gastronomy after the pandemic: Changes and challenges in food tourism”, 16th – 19th February 2022 (Girona, Spain).

A course of “Advanced Quantitative Research Methodology for Tourism and Hospitality”, organised by the Graduate School of Tourism Management at the National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand during 9th October and 27th February 2022 (30 hours).

Seminar: “Gastronomy tourism for sustainable community development in Ayutthaya”, organised by the Graduate School of Tourism Management at the National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand, 9th July 2022.

2nd PhD Joint Seminar in Tourism Research (2023), organised by the University of Girona. Presentation titled “Sharing food experiences: A sentiment analysis of Google Maps Local Guide reviews”, 12th May 2023 (Girona, Spain).

10th conference French Association for Tourism Management– AFMAT (2023) “The future of Tourism: Mutations and adaptations”. Presentation titled “A proposal for a tourists' behavioural model: Exploring the factors influencing tourism sharing behaviour via social media”, 31st May – 2nd June 2023 (Girona, Spain).

2nd Tourism Research Methods Summer School on “Visual Research Methods for Tourism”, organised by the Free University of Bozen, Italy from 10th – 14th July 2023 (30 hours).

Research stay

During the period of this thesis, a research stay was carried out between May 2022 and August 2022 at the Graduate School of Tourism Management at the National Institute of Development Administration in Bangkok, Thailand. Thank you for Assistant Professor Paithoon Monpanthong and Professor Therdchai Choibamroong's invitation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CR	Composite Reliability
CSV	Comma-Separated Value
DMOs	Destination Marketing Organisations
DF	Degree of Freedom
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
Google Colab	Google Colaboratory
H	Hypothesis
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
ML	Machine Learning
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NLTK	Natural Language Toolkit
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RQ	Research Question
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
SVM	Supervised Vector Machine
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
UdG	University of Girona
UGC	User-Generated Content
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD would not have been possible to accomplish without the encouragement and guidance of innumerable people. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who contributed to the success of this endeavour.

First and foremost, my sincere thanks go to my esteemed supervisors, Prof. Lluís Coromina and Prof. Ariadna Gassiot for both support and guidance throughout three years of the doctoral journey. Their valuable comments and helpful suggestions have been fundamental to the development of this research. Their mentoring has not only moulded my dissertation but also fostered my growth as a scholar.

My grateful thanks extend to all my professors and my colleagues at the University of Girona (UdG) for backing me up with their professional expertise. They have been sources of inspiration and helped validate the questionnaire used in this study.

I would like to sincerely thank the countless individuals who participated in the studies and surveys that served as the cornerstone of my research. Your willingness to volunteer your time and input has immeasurable value.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support provided by the IFUdg2020 from the University of Girona, which enabled me to dedicate myself fully to the completion of my thesis.

My grateful thanks to my dearest family: my parents, Somporn and Pakarat Poyoi, my sisters Rattanaorn Poyoi and Pansupa Chuwait, my brother Rattanachot Poyoi, my ants Mai, Pai, Nuch, Nok, for their love, steadfast support and boundless encouragement. Your belief in my capabilities kept me going through the challenges of this journey. Also, thanks to my little niece Cherproud and other family members for keeping me upbeat and beaming while I have worked on my thesis. This thesis would have been incomplete without all this support.

A special thanks to my beloved husband for your love, understanding and unweaving support during studying my PhD. Your patience during late nights of work, your understanding of the time I spent on my research, and your standing by me through

any emotions have given me the strength to overcome challenges. I would like to thank you for being an integral part of my journey.

I am profoundly thankful to my friends, whether in PhD room, in Girona and those in Thailand for both their intellectual and emotional reinforcement. Their encouraging words and providing the necessary breaks that kept me in balance.

Finally, I would like to thank and dedicate this thesis to my grandfather. Although he passed away before completing my dissertation, his wisdom and encouragement continue to inspire me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	12
RESUM	15
RESUMEN.....	18
INTRODUCTION	21
OBJECTIVES OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS	29
ARTICLE 1:	32
ARTICLE 2	50
ARTICLE 3	77
CONCLUSIONS.....	103
REFERENCES	107

LIST OF FIGURES

Article 1

Figure 1: The process diagram of the proposed solution.....	37
Figure 2: Review rating comparison of food experiences given in reviews before and during the pandemic.....	39
Figure 3: Comparison of sentiment polarity review data toward food experiences....	40
Figure 4: The distribution of word clouds towards food experiences before and during the pandemic.....	40
Figure 5: Bigram analysis of the review text.....	42
Figure 6: The proposed concept of sharing food experiences.....	43
Appendix 1: Examples of food tourism in the study area.....	49

Article 2

Figure 1: Conceptual framework.....	58
Figure 2: Confirmatory factor analysis model of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.....	65

Article 3

Figure 1: Proposed research model.....	85
Figure 2: Structural model.....	91
Figure 3: Multigroup structural model.....	92

LIST OF TABLES

Article 1

Table 1: Analysis of food experience dimensions.....	35
Table 2: Example of output of preprocessing stage.....	38
Table 3: Example of sentiment analysis from Google Maps reviews.....	39
Table 4: Analysis of food experience dimensions.....	43

Article 2

Table 1: Motivation factors to share food experiences from previous studies	54
Table 2: The motivation items modified from literature.....	59
Table 3: The demographic characteristics of the respondents.....	61
Table 4: Exploratory factor analysis results.....	62
Table 5: Confirmatory factor analysis results with reliability and validity.....	63
Table 6: Discriminant validity and correlations of the construct.....	64

Article 3

Table 1: Constructs and items.....	86
Table 2: The demographic characteristics.....	88
Table 3: The overall goodness-of-fit for the measurement model.....	89
Table 4: Construct validity and reliability assessment.....	89
Table 5: Discriminant validity.....	90
Table 6: Hypothesized results.....	91
Table 7: Measurement invariance testing.....	92
Table 8: Multigroup analysis results.....	93

ABSTRACT

Social media has grown over recent years, and it is unambiguously evident that it plays an essential role in tourist behaviour and destination decisions significantly. In particular, when deciding where to travel or dine, people often rely on opinions, and reviews posted online by other experienced users. In today's digital age, the trend of posting photos and sharing food consumer experiences through social media has become increasingly popular, and it is thus of considerable interest to explore the significance of this phenomenon in the tourism context. It is essential to comprehend the travellers' insights on food experiences and their sharing of these experiences through social media.

The thesis first's aim is to study the traveller's perceptions of food experiences expressed in online reviews by comparing the experiences before and during the COVID-19 crisis. Online reviews derived from Google Maps platform are collected to investigate how people experience and what they share about their food experiences. A sentiment analysis approach, together with multiple NLP techniques (text mining, word cloud generation, and n-gram algorithm), was used to explore many food experience reviews. Results show the travellers' sentiments towards food experiences shared in online reviews. First, the frequency terms of each sentiment category are identified, and the findings suggest that people are more likely to review positively than negatively about their dining experiences to the public. This implies that positive experiences with cuisine as a satisfaction factor encourage people to share their experiences on social media. Second, the six key attributes of food experiences that people share on online reviews are classified, including food and product, atmosphere, service, place, price, and activity. Eventually, some differences between online reviews about food experiences before and during the COVID-19 period are compared and exposed. By adopting this novel approach, we have in-depth insights into the important elements that influence the perceptions and experiences of individuals regarding food. The study provides businesses with a sentiment analysis model that can be used to extract customer reviews and can be applied to other disciplines to promote sustainable development.

With the growing importance of online reviews or eWOM about food in hospitality and tourism, the second article delves into research on the motivation for sharing food-related experiences through social media. To understand the motivational components and compare their differences for sharing food experiences through social media, a measurement scale of motivation is developed and validated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Multiple relevant indicators that contribute to tourist motivation to share food experiences on social media are defined and grouped into critical meaningful dimensions. According to the outcomes, the study suggests that travellers' motivation in sharing food experiences is a multidimensional construct with four dimensions. These were referred to as social recognition, perceived enjoyment, self-achievement, and altruism. This study contributes to the body of knowledge of the main characteristics and the dominant dimension in shaping tourism motivation to share food experiences on social media. The enterprise can employ these motivational drives in sharing food with the public to design the appropriate marketing strategy to enhance its business.

Based on the findings of the two articles above, this led to the development of a theoretical model of sharing food tourism experience in the third article. The causal relationships among the constructs of relationships among motivation, dining satisfaction, sharing intention, sharing behaviour, and loyalty were tested. Additionally, an empirical evidence existing in the literature reflects that sharing dining experiences and posting food photos through social media has become a popular trend among millennials and Generation Z, and it is predicted that these two generations will have different attitudes and consumer behaviours when using social media platforms. Given the evidence, the third article thus investigated and compared differences between the constructs of these two groups. The findings first show that tourist motivation positively influences the intention to share food experiences on social media for both generations. Specifically, millennials are more motivated than Generation Z to share their food experiences. Whereas the analytical results provide evidence that satisfaction with dining experiences influences tourist sharing intention only for Gen Z. Furthermore, the impact of intention to share food experiences on social media directly relates to travellers' sharing behaviour as well as loyalty to the destination in both Millennials and Gen Z. These results provide valuable information to marketing literature on the different of the factor and its impact of intention to share food

experiences on social media among millennials and Gen-Z traveller that can be used to boost food tourism in the destination.

This thesis contributes to advance knowledge on the travellers' perspectives on food experiences and sharing these experiences through social media. The study represents the role of gastronomy and social media in shaping the tourism experience at the destination. Methodologically, the thesis also contributes by presenting how an online review can be analysed and interpreted in studies related to food tourism. The innovative tailored sentiment analysis model presented in the study can help to understand customer experiences, and it can be applied to other fields to aid in the development of better customer service and great marketing campaigns. From the perspective of theoretical implications, contribution is based on the development of a conceptual behavioural model of sharing food tourism on social media through relationship between motivation and dining satisfaction, sharing intention, sharing behaviour, and loyalty. From a practical point of view, results help destination marketing organisations (DMOs) to better understand of tourists' behaviour, especially on their food sharing experiences. Furthermore, they must consider all these behavioural components to develop more specific and effective marketing strategies for improving tourism experiences and eventually bring the creation of sustainable competitive advantage to support the development of food tourism.

RESUM

Les xarxes socials han crescut durant els darrers anys, i, sens dubtes, juguen un paper essencial en el comportament dels turistes i les decisions de destinació de manera significativa. En particular, a l'hora de decidir on viatjar o sopar, la gent sovint es basa en opinions i comentaris publicats en línia per altres usuaris experimentats. En l'era digital actual, la tendència de publicar fotos i compartir experiències culinàries dels consumidors a través de les xarxes socials s'ha popularitzat cada cop més i, per tant, és d'interès considerable explorar la importància d'aquest fenomen en el context turístic. És essencial comprendre les idees dels viatgers sobre les experiències gastronòmiques i la seva compartició, a través de les xarxes socials.

El primer objectiu de la tesi és estudiar les percepcions del viatger sobre les experiències culinàries expressades a les ressenyes en línia comparant les experiències abans i durant la crisi de la COVID-19. Les ressenyes en línia derivades de la plataforma Google Maps es recullen per investigar com viu la gent i què comparteixen sobre les seves experiències gastronòmiques. Es va utilitzar un enfocament d'anàlisi de sentiments, juntament amb diverses tècniques de PNL (mineria de text, generació de núvols de paraules i algorisme n-gram), per explorar moltes revisions d'experiències alimentàries. Els resultats mostren els sentiments dels viatgers cap a les experiències culinàries compartides a les ressenyes en línia. En primer lloc, s'identifiquen els termes de freqüència de cada categoria de sentiment i els resultats suggereixen que la gent té més probabilitats de revisar positivament que negativament les seves experiències gastronòmiques al públic. Això implica que les experiències positives amb la cuina com a factor de satisfacció animen la gent a compartir les seves experiències a les xarxes socials. En segon lloc, es classifiquen els sis atributs clau de les experiències alimentàries que la gent comparteix a les ressenyes en línia, com ara menjar i producte, ambient, servei, lloc, preu i activitat. Finalment, es comparen i s'exposen algunes diferències entre les revisions en línia sobre experiències alimentàries abans i durant el període de la Covid-19. En adoptar aquest nou enfocament, tenim una visió detallada dels elements importants que influeixen en les percepcions i experiències de les persones pel que fa als aliments. L'estudi proporciona a les empreses un model d'anàlisi de sentiments que es pot

utilitzar per extreure ressenyes dels clients i que es pot aplicar a altres disciplines per promoure un desenvolupament sostenible.

Amb la creixent importància de les revisions en línia o eWOM sobre l'alimentació en l'hostaleria i el turisme, el segon article aprofundeix en la investigació sobre la motivació per compartir experiències relacionades amb l'alimentació a través de les xarxes socials. Per entendre els components motivacionals i comparar les seves diferències per compartir experiències alimentàries a través de les xarxes socials, es desenvolupa i valida una escala de mesura de la motivació mitjançant l'anàlisi factorial confirmatòria (CFA). Es defineixen múltiples indicadors rellevants que contribueixen a la motivació turística per compartir experiències gastronòmiques a les xarxes socials i s'agrupen en dimensions crítiques significatives. Segons els resultats, l'estudi suggereix que la motivació dels viatgers per compartir experiències alimentàries és una construcció multidimensional amb quatre dimensions. Aquests s'anomenaven reconeixement social, gaudir percebut, superació personal i altruisme. Aquest estudi contribueix al conjunt de coneixements de les principals característiques i la dimensió dominant en la configuració de la motivació turística per compartir experiències alimentàries a les xarxes socials. L'empresa pot utilitzar aquests impulsos motivacionals per compartir aliments amb el públic per dissenyar l'estratègia de màrqueting adequada per millorar el seu negoci.

A partir de les conclusions dels dos articles anteriors, això va conduir al desenvolupament d'un model teòric de compartir l'experiència del turisme gastronòmic en el tercer article. Es van provar les relacions causals entre els constructes de relacions entre la motivació, la satisfacció del menjar, la intenció de compartir, el comportament de compartir i la fidelitat. A més, una evidència empírica existent a la literatura reflecteix que compartir experiències gastronòmiques i publicar fotos de menjar a través de les xarxes socials s'ha convertit en una tendència popular entre els millennials i la Generació Z, i es preveu que aquestes dues generacions tindran actituds i comportaments de consumidor diferents derivats de la utilització de les xarxes socials. Donada l'evidència, el tercer article va investigar i comparar les diferències entre els constructes d'aquests dos grups. Els resultats mostren primer que la motivació turística influeix positivament en la intenció de compartir experiències alimentàries a les xarxes socials per a ambdues generacions. Concretament, els

millennials estan més motivats que la Generació Z per compartir les seves experiències gastronòmiques. Mentre que els resultats analítics proporcionen evidències que la satisfacció amb les experiències gastronòmiques només influeix en la intenció de compartir els turistes per a la generació Z. A més, l'impacte de la intenció de compartir experiències alimentàries a les xarxes socials es relaciona directament amb el comportament compartit dels viatgers, així com amb la fidelitat a la destinació en els dos grups, Mil·lennista i Gen Z. Aquests resultats proporcionen informació valuosa a la literatura de màrqueting sobre la diferència del factor i el seu impacte de la intenció de compartir experiències alimentàries a les xarxes socials entre els viatgers Mil·lennista i Gen-Z que es poden utilitzar per impulsar el turisme gastronòmic a la destinació.

Aquesta tesi contribueix a avançar en el coneixement sobre les perspectives dels viatgers en les experiències alimentàries i a compartir aquestes experiències a través de les xarxes socials. L'estudi representa el paper de la gastronomia i les xarxes socials a l'hora de donar forma a l'experiència turística a la destinació. Metodològicament, la tesi també contribueix presentant com una revisió en línia que es pot analitzar i interpretar en estudis relacionats amb el turisme gastronòmic. L'innovador model d'anàlisi de sentiments presentat a l'estudi pot ajudar a entendre les experiències dels clients i es pot aplicar a altres camps per ajudar en el desenvolupament d'un millor servei al client i grans campanyes de màrqueting. Des de la perspectiva de les implicacions teòriques, la contribució es basa en el desenvolupament d'un model de comportament conceptual de compartir el turisme gastronòmic a les xarxes socials mitjançant la relació entre la motivació i la satisfacció del menjar, la intenció de compartir, el comportament de compartir i la fidelitat. Des d'un punt de vista pràctic, els resultats ajuden les organitzacions de màrqueting de destinació (DMOs) a entendre millor el comportament dels turistes, especialment en les seves experiències gastronòmiques compartides. A més, han de tenir en compte tots aquests components de comportament per desenvolupar estratègies de màrqueting més específiques i efectives per millorar les experiències turístiques i, eventualment, aportar la creació d'avantatges competitius sostenibles per donar suport al desenvolupament del turisme gastronòmic.

RESUMEN

Las redes sociales han crecido en los últimos años y, sin duda, juegan un papel esencial en el comportamiento de los turistas y las decisiones de destino de forma significativa. En particular, a la hora de decidir dónde viajar o cenar, la gente a menudo se basa en opiniones y comentarios publicados online por otros usuarios experimentados. En la era digital actual, la tendencia de publicar fotos y compartir experiencias culinarias de los consumidores a través de las redes sociales se ha popularizado cada vez más y, por tanto, es de interés considerable explorar la importancia de este fenómeno en el contexto turístico. Es esencial comprender las ideas de los viajeros sobre las experiencias gastronómicas y su compartición a través de las redes sociales.

El primer objetivo de la tesis es estudiar las percepciones del viajero sobre las experiencias culinarias expresadas en las reseñas online comparando las experiencias antes y durante la crisis de la COVID-19. Las reseñas online derivadas de la plataforma Google Maps se recogen para investigar cómo vive la gente y qué comparten sobre sus experiencias gastronómicas. Se utilizó un enfoque de análisis de sentimientos, junto con diversas técnicas de PNL (minería de texto, generación de nubes de palabras y algoritmo n-gram), para explorar muchas revisiones de experiencias alimentarias. Los resultados muestran los sentimientos de los viajeros hacia las experiencias culinarias compartidas en las reseñas online. En primer lugar, se identifican los términos de frecuencia de cada categoría de sentimiento y los resultados sugieren que la gente tiene mayores probabilidades de revisar positivamente que negativamente sus experiencias gastronómicas al público. Esto implica que las experiencias positivas con la cocina como factor de satisfacción animan a la gente a compartir sus experiencias en las redes sociales. En segundo lugar, se clasifican los seis atributos clave de las experiencias alimentarias que la gente comparte en las reseñas online, como comida y producto, ambiente, servicio, lugar, precio y actividad. Finalmente, se comparan y se exponen algunas diferencias entre las revisiones online sobre experiencias alimentarias antes y durante el período de la Covid-19. Al adoptar este nuevo enfoque, tenemos una visión detallada de los elementos importantes que influyen en las percepciones y experiencias de las

personas en lo que se refiere a los alimentos. El estudio proporciona a las empresas un modelo de análisis de sentimientos que puede utilizarse para extraer reseñas de los clientes y que se puede aplicar a otras disciplinas para promover un desarrollo sostenible.

Con la creciente importancia de las revisiones online o eWOM sobre la alimentación en la hostelería y el turismo, el segundo artículo profundiza en la investigación sobre la motivación para compartir experiencias relacionadas con la alimentación a través de las redes sociales. Para entender los componentes motivacionales y comparar sus diferencias por compartir experiencias alimentarias a través de las redes sociales, se desarrolla y valida una escala de medida de la motivación mediante el análisis factorial confirmatorio (CFA). Se definen múltiples indicadores relevantes que contribuyen a la motivación turística por compartir experiencias gastronómicas en las redes sociales y se agrupan en dimensiones críticas significativas. Según los resultados, el estudio sugiere que la motivación de los viajeros por compartir experiencias alimentarias es una construcción multidimensional con cuatro dimensiones. Éstas se llamaban reconocimiento social, disfrutar percibido, superación personal y altruismo. Este estudio contribuye al conjunto de conocimientos de las principales características y la dimensión dominante en la configuración de la motivación turística para compartir experiencias alimentarias en las redes sociales. La empresa puede utilizar estos impulsos motivacionales para compartir alimentos con el público para diseñar la estrategia de marketing adecuada para mejorar su negocio.

A partir de las conclusiones de los dos artículos anteriores, esto condujo al desarrollo de un modelo teórico de compartir la experiencia del turismo gastronómico en el tercer artículo. Se probaron las relaciones causales entre los constructos de relaciones entre la motivación, la satisfacción de la comida, la intención de compartir, el comportamiento de compartir y la fidelidad. Además, una evidencia empírica existente en la literatura refleja que compartir experiencias gastronómicas y publicar fotos de comida a través de las redes sociales se ha convertido en una tendencia popular entre los Millennials y la Generación Z, y se prevé que estas dos generaciones tendrán actitudes y comportamientos de consumidor distintos derivados de la utilización de las redes sociales. Dada la evidencia, el tercer artículo investigó y comparó las diferencias entre los constructos de estos dos grupos. Los resultados muestran primero que la

motivación turística influye positivamente en la intención de compartir experiencias alimentarias en las redes sociales para ambas generaciones. Concretamente, los Millennials están más motivados que la Generación Z para compartir sus experiencias gastronómicas. Mientras que los resultados analíticos proporcionan evidencias de que la satisfacción con las experiencias gastronómicas sólo influye en la intención de compartir los turistas para la generación Z. Además, el impacto de la intención de compartir experiencias alimentarias en las redes sociales se relaciona directamente con el comportamiento compartido de los viajeros, así como con la fidelidad al destino en ambos grupos, Millennials y Gen Z. Estos resultados proporcionan información valiosa a la literatura de marketing sobre la diferencia del factor y su impacto de la intención de compartir experiencias alimentarias en las redes sociales entre los viajeros Millennials y Gen-Z que se pueden utilizar para impulsar el turismo gastronómico en el destino.

Esta tesis contribuye a avanzar en el conocimiento sobre las perspectivas de los viajeros en las experiencias alimentarias y compartir estas experiencias a través de las redes sociales. El estudio representa el papel de la gastronomía y las redes sociales a la hora de dar forma a la experiencia turística en destino. Metodológicamente, la tesis también contribuye presentando como una revisión online que se puede analizar e interpretar en estudios relacionados con el turismo gastronómico. El innovador modelo de análisis de sentimientos presentado en el estudio puede ayudar a entender las experiencias de los clientes y puede aplicarse a otros campos para ayudar en el desarrollo de un mejor servicio al cliente y grandes campañas de marketing. Desde la perspectiva de las implicaciones teóricas, la contribución se basa en el desarrollo de un modelo de comportamiento conceptual de compartir el turismo gastronómico en las redes sociales mediante la relación entre la motivación y la satisfacción del comer, la intención de compartir, el comportamiento de compartir y la fidelidad. Desde un punto de vista práctico, los resultados ayudan a las organizaciones de marketing de destino (DMOs) a entender mejor el comportamiento de los turistas, especialmente en sus experiencias gastronómicas compartidas. Además, deben tener en cuenta todos estos componentes de comportamiento para desarrollar estrategias de marketing más específicas y efectivas para mejorar las experiencias turísticas y, eventualmente, aportar la creación de ventajas competitivas sostenibles para apoyar el desarrollo del turismo gastronómico.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the rapid advancement of information technologies and the widespread availability of the Internet have revolutionized the way we communicate and interact with others. Social media, such as websites, blogs and online review platforms have become a prominent channel for public discourse, enabling individuals to share and receive information. Social media has undergone a remarkable evolution, transcending its original purpose as a mere communication platform to become a powerful force that shapes consumer decision-making processes (Distaso & McCorkindale, 2017). This transformation has had a particularly significant impact on the tourism industry.

The information created and shared by social media users, referred to as User-Generated Content (UGC), includes online reviews, comments, photos, and videos (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2020). UGC by social media users can attract new visitors and keep existing clients loyal because, nowadays, consumers trust electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and online reviews more than advertising (Zhang et al., 2010). This massive amount of UGC has transformed social media into a dynamic hub for gathering travel inspiration, planning trips, and making informed choices. For example, this online information allows travellers to explore their destinations, discover a unique experience, evaluate the accommodation and assess the quality of service before making a final choice. Consequently, tourism businesses and destinations have recognized the need to adapt their marketing strategies to leverage the power of social media, engaging with users, and leveraging user-generated content to enhance their brand image and attract a wider audience.

Food plays an important role in attracting tourists to certain destinations (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Food tourism has currently emerged as a popular trend, capturing widespread attention, as evident from the growing body of evidence shared on social media platforms (The World Food Travel Association, 2020). Food tourism is defined by Hall (2006) as visits to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and other places with the main reasons being to taste or experience particular food-related products of the destinations. The concept of food tourism is

often described within the literature using interchangeable terms like gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism, food and wine tourism, tasting tourism and gourmet tourism (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; du Rand & Heath, 2006; Ellis et al., 2018; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Stone et al., 2017; Tikkanen, 2007). Consequently, whether referred to as gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism, or any other food-related term, it is commonly acknowledged as a food experience within a country, region, or area (Phunphothong & Sopha, 2013).

Indeed, food is not only a crucial component of any attraction but also contributes significantly to the tourist experience (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; du Rand & Heath, 2006; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Stone et al., 2017), as emphasized in destination marketing policies and strategies (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Tsai & Wang, 2017). The nature of food experiences including culinary-gastronomic experiences (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Hyun, 2010; Kleinhans & Van Heerden, 2016) has been of interest in the tourism literature. Travellers' experiences of food and eating are considered as destination experiences that are integral components of their daily routines (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Food experiences are regarded as how individuals feel when dining out or participating in food-related activities. Interacting with food provides a gateway to experiencing different cultures, whether it involves eating out, exploring food markets, grocery shopping, attending festivals or events, joining cooking classes, or embarking on food tours (Cohen et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). Food experiences play a significant role in contributing to place attachment and the image of a tourist destination (Choe & Kim, 2019). Since individuals' food experiences that they receive during a trip can greatly affect their overall perception and engagement with that place.

With the dynamic evolution of modern information technology and the transformative impact of mobile communications, there has been a notable shift in social eating habits. Individuals are increasingly relying on online media to gather information, read reviews, and make informed decisions about restaurants and dining options before going out. Additionally, people use online platforms to share their dining experiences with others. This social media-driven behaviour has created a large amount of food-related content, shaping opinions, influencing trends, and even driving consumer decisions. In order to promote local food tourism, and guide potential market strategies, it is essential to

understand the sharing of travellers' food experience sharing on social media. Thus, one of the goals of the thesis is to analyse tourists' perspectives on food experiences in the destination as well as the behaviour of sharing food experiences on social media and its impacts.

Besides, these food experiences then are shared with others, such customer reviews and feedback can exert considerable influence over their decision-making process (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Food, as an attraction in itself, serves as a compelling inspiration for people to embark on travel adventures (Choe & Kim, 2019). Past research has stated food experiences as a multi-dimensionality (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Kleinhans & Van Heerden, 2016). They point out that food experiences encompass much more than just the cuisine. It consists of various elements such as the personnel, service, environment, atmosphere, and decorations. (Desmet & Schifferstein, 2008; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017; Young et al., 2018). Although the existing literature has highlighted the importance of multiple dimensions in dining experiences, the empirical evidence these tourists' experiences posted, especially on social media, lacked a more detailed discussion and applicable implications.

Additionally, since the onset of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in early 2020, the tourism industry has undergone a multifaceted impact, notably the food tourism sector (Fountain, 2021). The pandemic has affected aspects of food perception. On the one hand, it has brought about changes in food consumption patterns (Eftimov et al., 2020; Rodrigues 2021). Such changes could influence how people perceive food regarding accessibility, quality, and safety (Thomas & Feng, 2021). On the other hand, the pandemic has also elicited emotional responses and psychological impacts. The lockdowns, social distancing, and increased health concerns have played a role in shaping our emotions and experiences (Rehman et al., 2021). For this reason, anxiety about infection may lead to changes in eating habits and the emotional connection people have with food. Understanding the interplay between emotions and food experiences can shed light on the psychological dynamics surrounding food consumption during crises. By examining the existing literature on COVID-19 and the potential risks related to food consumption, there is little research on the influence of the pandemic on the public's perception of customers' food experience (Dedeoğlu, 2022; Hong, 2021). By analysing public reactions, such as opinions and sentiments

expressed in textual sources either social media posts or online platforms, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of how people's views and emotions on food experiences shift due to the pandemic. In light of this, the study also covers the existing gap by examining the effect of COVID-19 on the perception of food experiences online.

When considering the significance of sharing travel-related food experiences on social networking sites, the dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this sharing phenomenon. Accordingly, the research questions of the thesis are posed to find out: 1) What aspects of sharing experiences related to food activities were presented through social media?; 2) Why do tourist share their dining experiences on social media while travelling?; 3) What are the effects of sharing food experiences on social media on tourist behaviour?

Currently, online platforms have emerged as valuable and easily accessible sources for researchers, offering a reliable avenue to delve into customers' and tourists' perspectives. Some studies have utilized online reviews as means to investigate the experiences of customers in various contexts in tourism, for instance, hotel industry (Amadio & Procaccino, 2016), airport services (Li et al., 2022), tourist attractions (Stoleriu et al., 2019) and particularly restaurant management (Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020). To answer the first research question, data from online reviews is used to analyse the visitors' food experiences in the first article. Regarding the concept of food experiences, many scholars have proposed the factors that affect food experiences and have classified them into multiple dimensions (Hyun, 2010; Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Kleinhans & Van Heerden, 2016; Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020; Wong et al., 2020). However, these attributes of food experiences at the destination that consumers review online must be examined. It is noteworthy that although food experiences have been extensively researched, most of these studies generally focus on the perspective of tourists' experiences at the restaurant. It's imperative to take into account a variety of food-related activities at the gastronomic tourism destinations, such as local food markets and street food experiences, in order to contemplate the whole range of local food offers and to provide a different view to local food tourism experiences.

Thus, the first article focuses on improving eWOM food tourism education by contemplating the entire food experiences. This article has broadened the scope of

existing tourism research by providing not only a comprehensive understanding of how tourists perceived their experiences with local food at a certain destination but also an in-depth awareness of the role of the potential pandemic impact on food tourism. As no prior analysis of online reviews has produced evidence to analyse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food-related travel experiences (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2020). The evolution of consumer sentiment regarding the impact of COVID-19 pandemic lacks greater comprehension and insight. Understanding these changes is very much needed not only for getting insights into the pandemic's influence on individuals' lives, but also for shaping future food tourism-related policies and initiatives. With this research gap, the first article attempts to explore how people feel and what they share about their food experiences on social media, The big data sources of food reviews from Google Maps review platform are used to analyse text data using the sentiment analysis technique. The results are expected to explore the users' sentiments towards food experiences and the key attributes of experience sharing related to food activities in online reviews were identified both before and during the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, a novel approach to sentiment analysis is developed by adapting the techniques of word cloud generation and the n-gram algorithm to classify whether data is positive, neutral, or negative as natural language processing (NLP).

From posting pictures of plated meals and surrounding to writing detailed reviews of dining establishments, the act of sharing food experiences on social media has become an increasingly prevalent and influential phenomenon. Understanding the motivations behind travellers' inclination to share their food experiences on social media is the crucial initial step in developing a theoretical understanding of the underlying factors that drive this behaviour. Previous research identified motivational factors for predicting the behaviour of sharing intention (Cheung & Lee, 2012). By exploring the determinants that trigger travellers' decision to share their food-related moments online, we can gain valuable insights into the interplay between travel, food, and digital communication.

Accordingly, the second article then finds out the travellers' motivation behind sharing food experience behaviours on social media. Previous literature has pointed out the motivations for why people are willing to share travel experiences on social media in various concepts (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Daxböck et al., 2021; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022). Highlighting on the motivation for why

tourists contribute food-related content on social media, it has been mentioned in some researches Wang et al. (2016). Nevertheless, the specific measurement scale for the motivation behind sharing food experiences during travel is still required to develop and examine. By investigating motive factors, we seek to uncover the psychological and sociological drivers that encourage tourists to share their food experiences with others. The finding provides the validated measurement model of motivation with multidimensions to explain why tourists share food experiences on social media. Understanding these motivations will provide valuable insights for tourism marketers, enabling them to tailor their strategies to align with tourists' desires and preferences.

Besides the motivational perspective, dining experience factors such as satisfaction is mentioned may affect intentions to share the online contents (Javed et al., 2021), which leads to the third article of the thesis, evaluating the factors that influence the intention to share food experiences while travelling on social media. Furthermore, prior research has mostly emphasized the behaviours and factors that lead to the intention to share food experiences on social media. However, it is still in its early stages, and it is unknown what substantial influence it will have on sharing eating experiences on social media. Furthermore, the impact of sharing intention on post behaviour, such as loyalty and sharing intention, has yet to be investigated.

The impact of sharing tourist experiences on social media has been noted in some studies that had a bearing on their behaviour (Wang et al., 2016) and their loyalty to the destination (Jain et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020). Sharing the intention of tourism experiences is mentioned that directly related to their behaviour. The effect of sharing intention was empirically linked to behavioural intention or future behaviour (Wong et al., 2020). The behaviour of sharing memorable tourism experiences on mobile social media influences tourists' intention to visit other destinations (Kumar et al., 2021). Based on this viewpoint, the impact of sharing food experiences during the trip will be investigated together with its influence in the third article.

Another interesting point, sharing food experiences, such as posting photographs or reviews, has become a popular trend, particularly among younger generations, such as Generation Z and millennials (Liu et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2019). Today's Generation Z and millennials are integral parts of the online community. The previous research points out that a significant number of people of these generations actively

engage in sharing their food experiences online such as posting food or drink-related photos or videos on social media platforms (Hanafiah et al., 2019). Young people are active participants in the digital landscape, using social media like Twitter, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram as powerful tools for self-expression, communication, and identity building. They not only share their experiences online but also seek out the experiences of others through social networking sites. Past studies on travelling photo-taking and photo-sharing habits of food products have explored the behavioural differences in the consumer generation (Hanafiah et al., 2019). Therefore, in the third article, the role of age in sharing behaviour is examined.

Based on social media usage patterns, there is doubt as to whether the behaviour of sharing food experiences on social media can be changed depending on differences among generations. This suggests that the relationships between sharing motivation, satisfaction with food experiences, intention to share, sharing behaviour, and loyalty may be influenced by generational differences among travellers. Thus, the third article will incorporate a cross-generational comparison between Millennials and Generation Z to explore any differences in sharing food experiences on social media. These young generations: Millennials (aged between 27 and 42) and Gen Z (aged between 18 and 16) are chosen due to their reputation for being technologically adept and their pronounced engagement on social media platforms. By focusing on these age groups, the study aims to gain insights into their unique characteristics and behaviours as active participants in the digital community (Chellasamy et al., 2022). Through multigroup structural equation modelling (SEM), the key relationships among causative factors are compared between two generations by examining if the structural model differed significantly between Millennials and Gen Z. As a result of the third paper, a conceptual framework for sharing food experiences on online social networks is suggested.

All three articles centre their analysis on the food experience-sharing behaviour of tourists visiting Ayutthaya, Thailand. Ayutthaya, full name “Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya”, was the ancient capital city of Thailand before Bangkok was established. Ayutthaya is an important cultural attraction in Thailand that has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1991 (UNESCO, 2023). Along with its exceptional historical landmarks, Ayutthaya's traditional cuisine also showcases its heritage and

culture. Notably, Ayutthaya's culinary offerings have garnered recognition on a global scale, as it was selected by the prestigious Michelin Guide as one of the five prominent gastronomic cities in Thailand (Michelin Guide, 2021). For this reason, Ayutthaya City is selected as a case study for examining food experiences. Thus, it is essentially due to its popularity for its food tourism and rich cultural heritage. Moreover, Ayutthaya has a variety of food attractions that attract many tourists and foodies to visit, such as renowned restaurants, local food markets, floating markets, night markets, and outstanding street food.

To sum up, the findings from this study will provide valuable insights for food tourism marketers, service providers, and online platforms. By understanding the drivers and dynamics behind the influence of UGC on consumer decision-making, marketers can develop targeted strategies for gastronomic tourism. Service providers can leverage UGC to improve their offerings and address areas for improvement, thereby fostering positive customer experiences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

This doctoral thesis entitled “A behavioural model for food tourism: an analysis of experiences on social media” presents three articles studied in the same research line and the general objective is:

- To provide a theoretical framework that comprehensively explains the tourists' behaviour in sharing their food experiences during the trip on social media.

All three articles share the scope of analysis which focuses on people willing to publicly share their food experiences on social media. The specific research objectives of each article are outlined below.

The first article, entitled “Local food experiences before and after COVID-19: A sentiment analysis of eWOM”, aims to examine how people feel and what they share about their food experiences online. Furthermore, to explore how these experiences have evolved lately due to the pandemic diseases, the differences between the period before and after the COVID-19 crisis have also been investigated. In this article, the online reviews regarding food experiences posted on Google Maps were analysed using natural language processing to investigate the perceptions of travellers' food experiences. The critical attributes of sharing food experiences online and the users' sentiments are key for understanding users' perceptions evolution, particularly in its relationship to the context of the pandemic.

Therefore, to achieve the purpose of revealing the travellers' perspectives on food experiences at the destination, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the travellers' sentiments towards food experiences found in Google Maps reviews?
2. What are the key attributes of food experiences that people share on online reviews?
3. Are there differences in opinions about food experiences before and during the COVID-19 crisis?

The second article focuses on studying the reasons why people are willing to share their food experiences on social media. The factors that motivate tourists to share food-related content on social media are taken into account in the research. This article is entitled “Exploring traveller’s motivation for sharing food experiences online”.

As previously mentioned in the introduction, existing literature has studied the motivations for sharing food experiences on social networking sites. However, the key indicators to measure these motives have never been evidently determined and proven. It is essential that the validity and reliability of the instrument for measuring the structure model of sharing motivation must be developed. Therefore, the second article intends to set out a measurement scale for assessing the motivation that triggers people to post food-related content during travel on social media. For this, it provides a greater motivational perspective on sharing about food experiences on social media by presenting distinct multidimensional factors through the new measurement model.

Thus, the two main objectives of the second article are outlined as follows:

1. To identify the dimensions of tourists’ motivation behind sharing food experiences on social media.
2. To develop a measurement scale for those motivations in sharing food experiences online during the trip.

The third article, entitled “Sharing food experiences on social media: A cross-generational comparison between Millennials and Gen Z”, proposes the theoretical model of sharing food experiences on social media. Due to limited empirical research concerning the link between social media and its influence on food tourism industry, the factors that affect the intention to share food experiences on social media, including sharing motivation and satisfaction with dining experiences as well as the impacting factors of sharing intention on tourists’ actual behaviours and loyalty to the destination, are considered together to demonstrate the causal relationships. Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, previous literatures has demonstrated that tourists with different generational cohorts tend to have different characteristics and preferences in using social media to share their experiences with the public (Dabija & Lung, 2019; Hanafiah et al., 2019; Wahyuningsih et al., 2022). The change of the factors that affect the intention to share food experiences and how its impact on tourist behaviour across

two cohorts of generations (Millennials and Gen Z) is taken into consideration in this article. Consequently, this article also incorporates generational factors as a moderating effect on the structural relationships by comparative analysis between Millennials and Gen Z travellers. Through this extension, the model proposed in this article offers a new insight relating to cross-generational differences in the behaviour of sharing gastronomic tourism experiences.

This subsequently leads to the following research objectives:


1. To explore the factors influencing the intention to share food experiences while travelling on social media.
2. To examine the impact of the intention to share food experiences via social media on tourist behaviour and loyalty to the destination.
3. To investigate whether differences in these relationships among the construct (motivation to share food experiences on social media, dining experiences, sharing intention, tourist behaviour and loyalty) between Millennials and Gen Z.

Through these three articles, it sheds light on a comprehensive understanding of travellers' food experience-sharing behaviour on social media. The dissertation not only presents empirical evidence on what people post about food experiences on social media, but also examines why they share food experiences and how it influences their behavioural intentions.


ARTICLE 1

Local Food Experiences Before and After COVID-19: A Sentiment Analysis of eWOM

LOCAL FOOD EXPERIENCES BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19: A SENTIMENT ANALYSIS OF EWOM

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Abstract

Purpose – To use Natural Language Processing (NLP) to explore how people feel and what they share online about their experiences with food. In addition, to learn how these experiences have evolved recently, differences before and during the crisis COVID -19 will be explored.

Methodology/Design/Approach – A total of 35,001 reviews of restaurants and local cuisine establishments near tourist attractions in the city of Ayutthaya, Thailand, were extracted from the Google Local Guide platform. Several NLP techniques were used to analyse the text data, including sentiment analysis, word cloud analysis, and the N-gramme model.

Findings – The results reveal travellers' hidden sentiments toward dining experiences. Key attributes of experience sharing related to food activities in online reviews were identified both before and after COVID -19. From a theoretical perspective, the findings are relevant for researchers to recognise tourists' behaviour in sharing local food experiences. From a practical perspective, decision makers will have a better understanding of tourist behaviour to develop and implement appropriate strategies.

Originality of the research – This study is the first to analyse and interpret online reviews on Google Maps platform by applying text mining and sentiment analysis in gastronomic tourism research, especially in the context of COVID -19.

Keywords Google Maps Local Guide, social media, Natural Language Processing (NLP), online reviews, gastronomy, Thailand

Original scientific paper

Received 24 February 2023

Revised 31 March 2023

3 May 2023

Accepted 7 May 2023

<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.29.4.1>

INTRODUCTION

Social media is clearly viewed as a source of public discourse and people use it to share and receive information. The huge amount of online content on social media is crucial in the tourism industry, particularly regarding tourist decision-making processes (Distaso & Mccorkindale, 2017). This information created and shared by social media users, referred to as user-generated content (UGC), includes online reviews, comments, photos, and videos (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022). UGC by social media users can attract new visitors and keep existing clients loyal because today's consumers trust electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and online reviews more than advertising (Zhang et al., 2010). For example, WOM shared through mobile phones (mWOM) is determined by both relational and external elements (Velicia-Martin et al., 2023). In addition, these online reviews and ratings have a powerful influence on consumer behaviour. For example, online opinion platforms such as Airbnb, TripAdvisor, and Google Maps reviews, are used as deciding tools for where to travel or what to eat, and what to buy based on the feedback provided by other users (Von Helversen et al., 2018).

Food tourism has recently become a mainstream interest, as seen in the proliferating evidence on social media (The World Food Travel Association, 2020). So, in these online reviews, food is frequently one of the most discussed topics (Liu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017). Food photo posting and reviewing have become a recent trend on social media platforms (Javed et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2017). Tourists take food photos while travelling and post them on social media to show others where they dined and what local food they consumed (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Due to this ongoing expansion of UGC on social media, several studies have used this UGC data from restaurant reviews to explore consumer experiences (Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020), decision-making (Trivedi & Singh, 2021), and the quality of restaurant service (Mondo et al., 2022; Renganathan & Upadhy, 2021). Moreover, natural language processing (NLP) techniques such as sentiment analysis and text mining have been mostly used to analyse these online reviews.

Although previous studies performed sentiment analysis to describe food experiences on online platforms, the analyses were limited to investigating online reviews at restaurants (Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020). In order to consider the whole range of local food offer, different food-related experiences at the destination must be considered. For example, local markets or street food as authentic food experiences have not been included in previous studies (Björk & Kauppinen-räsänen, 2019) and can provide a different view to local food tourism experiences. Moreover, previous research to analyse online reviews has not produced evidence to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food travel experiences. Greater understanding and insights into consumer sentiment evolution regarding the COVID-19 pandemic are still lacking (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022). Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic at the beginning of 2020, the pattern of consumption behaviour can considerably change. The pandemic has made people worried about travelling, which has directly affected food tourism (Fountain, 2022). Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the public perceptions of customers' food experiences through ratings and online

reviews changed after the outbreak of the pandemic. As a side effect of COVID-19, tourism brands and tourist destinations take into account the sentiments of customers on online platforms to develop strategies to generate business. It is thus vital to understand how COVID-19 affects the perception of food experience. There is, therefore, a need to address and better understand COVID-19 informational crisis and gauge public sentiment so that appropriate policy decisions can be implemented (Samuel et al., 2020).

Gastronomy plays a crucial part in attracting visitors to some destinations (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Rousta & Jam-shidi, 2020). Food can be fascinating for tourists and has become part of some countries' brand image. Eating out in a restaurant or café, enjoying street food, or visiting the local markets are part of the local food tourism offer (Yagoda, 2022). Given the tourism potential of local food, some public entities have launched campaigns to high-light and promote it as part of the national marketing strategy (Sritama, 2018). Thus, it is necessary to create a positive tourism experience for tourists and to understand which elements contribute to tourists' behaviour, especially in recent years when COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the food tourism scenario. Thus, the main contribution of this article is to provide better knowledge on food tourism eWOM by considering the whole range of experiences and the effects that a pandemic may have caused.

The study aims to investigate the travellers' food experiences by analysing the online reviews from Google Local Guide platform. In this research, the methodological contribution is to develop a novel approach to sentiment analysis by adapting the techniques of word cloud generation and the n-gram algorithm. Sentiment analysis, often known as an opinion mining tool, is a type of natural language processing (NLP) from machine learning used to classify whether data is positive, neutral, or negative (Liu, 2012). A word cloud is a graphical representation of text data in the form of tags, which are frequently single words whose significance is visualised by their size and colour. A novel method of N-gram feature is a classification model based on the set of co-occurring words present in corpus text.

Therefore, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the travellers' perspectives on food experiences at the destination, the research questions are the following: (RQ1) What are the travellers' sentiments towards food experiences found in Google Maps reviews?; (RQ2) What are the major attributes of food experiences that people share on online reviews?; (RQ3) Are there differences in opinions about food experiences before and after COVID-19 restrictions were eased and allowed them again?

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: after this introduction, a thorough review of related literature on food tourism experience, COVID-19 perceptions, online reviews and sentiment analysis is provided. The methodology employed in the study is explained in section 2. Section 3 presents the results and analysis of the data, followed by the discussion in section 4. Section 5 provides the implications of the study. Finally, the conclusion of this paper along with its limitations is given in the last section.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Food experiences affect affinity to a place and the tourism destination image (Choe & Kim, 2019). Firstly, the relationship between food and tourism is presented. Then, the public's perception of food during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on tourism is reviewed. Finally, the important role of social media and online reviews is explained.

1.1. Food Experience and Tourism

Food and tourism are undeniably related. Food and beverages are a vital part of the travel experience (Wang et al., 2017). Gastronomy significantly affects the tourism industry. Kim et al. (2009) demonstrate that food and eating out are important activities on trips and holidays. Gastronomy in each region represents that place's cultural uniqueness, which plays an essential role in attracting tourists to the destination, especially in Asian countries like China, India, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam, which is a prominent gourmet destination for travellers (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Chen & Huang (2016) describe four elements in the relationship between food and tourism. Food is cultural identity; food is an essential part of tourist attractions; food is a tourism product; and food is a crucial part of the travel experience. Food experiences are descriptions of how people feel when dining out or engaging in food-related activities. By interacting with the food, one can experience a culture in a variety of ways, such as eating out, visiting food markets, grocery shopping, other food-related activities, festivals or events, cooking classes, and food tours (Cohen et al., 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Zhang et al., 2010).

More and more people are searching for food activities through social media platforms. Customer reviews, feedback, and product rating scores influence their choices (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Food is an attraction that inspires people to travel (Choe & Kim, 2019). A thorough review of studies reveals that food experiences are not only about the cuisine, it is also about the personnel, the service, the environment, the atmosphere, the decorations, etc. (Desmet & Schifferstein, 2008; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017; Young et al., 2018).

As seen in Table 1, there are many different factors that contribute to dining experiences. Kleinhans et al. (2016) summarised the dimensions influencing the dining experience. They identified food, physical environment, ambience, service, price, health/cleanliness, and social factors are the prominent aspects of the dining experience. Jeaheng & Han (2020) found nine dimensions

that tourists are concerned regarding street food consumption: cul-tural and local experiences, menu and atmosphere, staff service, core food quality, value for money, product at-tractiveness, staff proficiency, packaging and portions, and tradition and authenticity. According to Stone et al. (2018), elements leading to memorable food experiences are diverse. They found five essential elements that help tourists have memorable culinary experiences. These attributes are food/beverages, location/setting, companions, occasion, and touristic elements (Choe & Kim, 2019). In the research by Hyun (2010), food quality, service quality, price, location, and environment are the key attributes that influence restaurant customers' decisions. Regarding sharing memorable experiences on mobile social media, findings by Wong et al. (2020) indicated scenery, enter-tainment, and interaction are three dimensions affecting tourists' sharing behaviour. Mathayomchan & Taecha-rungroj (2020) explore the principal attributes of customer experiences in restaurants in the UK posted on Google Maps reviews. They present four dimensions: food, service, atmosphere, and value (price).

Table 1: **Analysis of food experience dimensions**

Dimension	Description in previous literature	References
Food / Menu / Product	Food quality, food tastes, packaging and portions, food attractiveness.	Hyun (2010); Jeaheng & Han (2020); Kleinhans et al. (2016); Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj (2020); Stone et al. (2018).
Physical environ-ment / Ambience characteristics	Characteristics of the physical environment, such as health and cleanliness.	Hyun (2010); Jeaheng & Han (2020); Kleinhans et al. (2016); Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj (2020); Wong et al. (2020).
Service	Service quality, staff proficiency.	Hyun (2010); Jeaheng & Han (2020); Kleinhans et al. (2016); Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj (2020); Stone et al. (2018).
Place / location / setting	Where the food experience takes place.	Hyun (2010); Stone et al. (2018).
Price / value for money	Evaluation on the value for money of the food.	Hyun (2010); Jeaheng & Han (2020); Kleinhans et al. (2016); Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj (2020).
Activity	Touristic elements; entertainment; activities linked to the food experience.	Stone et al. (2018); Wong et al. (2020).
Social atmosphere	Social factors; Cultural and Local experienc-es; tradition and authenticity; companions; occasion; interaction	Jeaheng & Han (2020); Kleinhans et al. (2016); Stone et al. (2018); Wong et al. (2020)

1.2. Food Perception during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The spread of the COVID-19 crisis has significantly reduced global travel since March 2020. The tourism sector has suffered tremendously from this dramatic drop in international travel (Škare et al., 2021). Gastronomic tourism has been one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Fountain, 2022). In Thailand, tourism activity based on food, particularly in restaurants, markets, festivals, bars, cafes, and shopping malls, was suspended by order of the government (Sereenonchai & Arunrat, 2021). The sudden decline in the number of customers forced many eateries to close.

After the COVID-19 shutdowns, countries around the world have opened up again, but businesses are struggling to devise strategies to survive (Richards, 2020). According to reports, some consumers are concerned about food cooked outside the home (International Food Infomation Council, 2020). People have changed their dietary habits to meet their perception of the level of food security (Thomas & Feng, 2021; Janssen et al., 2021). This is consistent with a previous study in which health concerns contribute significantly to whether tourists consume local food (Choe & Kim, 2019). Dedeoğlu et al. (2022) examined Chinese tourists' different perceptions of food consumption in Italy and Thailand during COVID-19. The result found that travellers to Thailand perceive the risks of contract-ing COVID-19 while consuming local food there as low, which has a positive effect on their intention to consume that food, while the perceived risk is higher in Italy, which has a negative effect on travellers' intentions to consume food there. This is because tourist attitudes toward food consumption are a significant factor in their behaviour when visiting tourist destinations (Young et al., 2018). Jeaheng & Han (2020) studied the effect of Thai street food on tourists' post experiences and their perceptions during their visit to Thailand. They found that the variable of the perceived risks of consuming Thai street food plays a significant role as a moderator.

The role of COVID-19 in the relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions in local food consumption has been the focus of several studies. Rehman et al. (2022) revealed the degree to which tourists' intention and satisfaction with local food are related to their anxiety about COVID-19. However, there are still re-search gaps in this regard the impact of COVID-19 on food experiences posted on online reviews.

1.3. Online Reviews

Social media platforms have become the search engines many people use to decide when and where to travel or dine. They have an enormous influence on the decision-making process of most potential travellers (Distaso & Mccorkindale, 2017). Increasingly, the increase of user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms and the constant posting of travel destinations have become prominent ways to enhance people's travel plans. Tourism and hospitality customers can easily share travel-related content, resulting in the widespread availability of UGC (text, images, video, and audio) on social network sites (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). What is more, these experiences come from interactions that people have with brands (Wong et al., 2020).

There is some evidence that these media often motivate people to travel (Liu et al., 2019; Bakshi et al., 2019). Likewise, the feedback from customers on social media has a remarkable effect on the image of a destination. Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is particularly influential in decisions related to accommodations, travel ex-penses, and transportation. In contrast, e-WOM from local residents has a greater effect on decisions about gas-tronomy and safety (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Ratings and reviews play an enormous role in purchasing deci-sions. Users can give good and bad feedback on the brand. Tantrabundit (2018) indicated that the negative opin-ions of previous customers could have a greater effect on changing new customers' purchasing decisions than posi-tive ones. Positive reviews can inspire future customers to visit a destination. On the other hand, if the feedback is negative, the atmosphere of trust can be instantly undermined (Li et al., 2022).

Many scholars have reviewed data from online communities like Twitter, Facebook, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb to examine clients' perceptions of brands (Amadio & Procaccino, 2016; Leung et al., 2013; Nicolau et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2022). For example, the database from Twitter was used to explore purchasing behaviour re-garding tourism services (Philander & Zhong, 2016). Some studies analysed online reviews from TripAdvisor and used sentiment analysis to explain tourists' experiences (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022; Taecharungroj & Matha-yomchan, 2019; Stoleriu et al., 2019). Reviews on Google Maps, known as Google Local Guide reviews, have been mentioned in tourism and hospitality research for a few years (Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019; Shin et al., 2022). The Google Local Guides, now available on Google Maps, not only help users to find a desired destination and get around, but also to connect with other Google Maps users. Besides providing maps and routes, Google Maps allows users to view and share real-time experiences during visiting destinations.

With the growing influence of Google Maps (Georgiev, 2022), it needs to be understood by looking at users' experi-ence sharing on this application. To fill this gap, this study will reveal the perceptions of tourists' experiences of food in tourist destinations using review data from Google Local Guides.

1.4. Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis refers to classifying subjective texts' emotional status and attitudes with implicit sentiments (Avinash & Sivasankar, 2019). It is generally used for analysing textual data to gauge the ratio of sentiment value of user feedback on social media and online platforms (Garcia & Berton, 2021; Jain et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2022; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). Sentiment analysis, including text mining and natural language processing (NLP) techniques, assists in detecting users' opinions toward the brand and product from customer reviews (Suresha, 2020). Based on the polarity score, the categories of emotions in a statement can be assessed to be positive, negative, or neutral (Imran et al., 2022). In terms of sentiment classification, there are different options to do so. Many authors use different machine-learning (ML) approaches to perform textual analysis (Islam et al., 2021; Samuel et al., 2020; Srivastava et al., 2019; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). For example, Garcia and Berton (2021) use multiple ML algorithms and features in a comparative analysis of their methodology to examine the COVID-19-related tweets from Brazil and the United States. In their study, Twitter posts were analysed using sentiment analysis and topic modelling approaches. Saura et al. (2019) performed sentiment analysis with a Supervised Vector Machine (SVM) algorithm to identify key factors in UGC on Twitter for the development of successful startups. Boon-Itt & Skunkan (2020) studied topic modelling based on unsupervised machine learning to collect tweet data for public perception of COVID-19. A lexicon-based approach was adopted to demonstrate eight basic emotions: anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust. In the study, the most common topics in the tweets were visualised by unigram feature through word clouds. TextBlob Python library is also used to determine positive, negative and neutral sentiments based on polarity scores on online reviews (Aljedaani et al., 2022, Imran et al., 2022, Naseem et al., 2021).

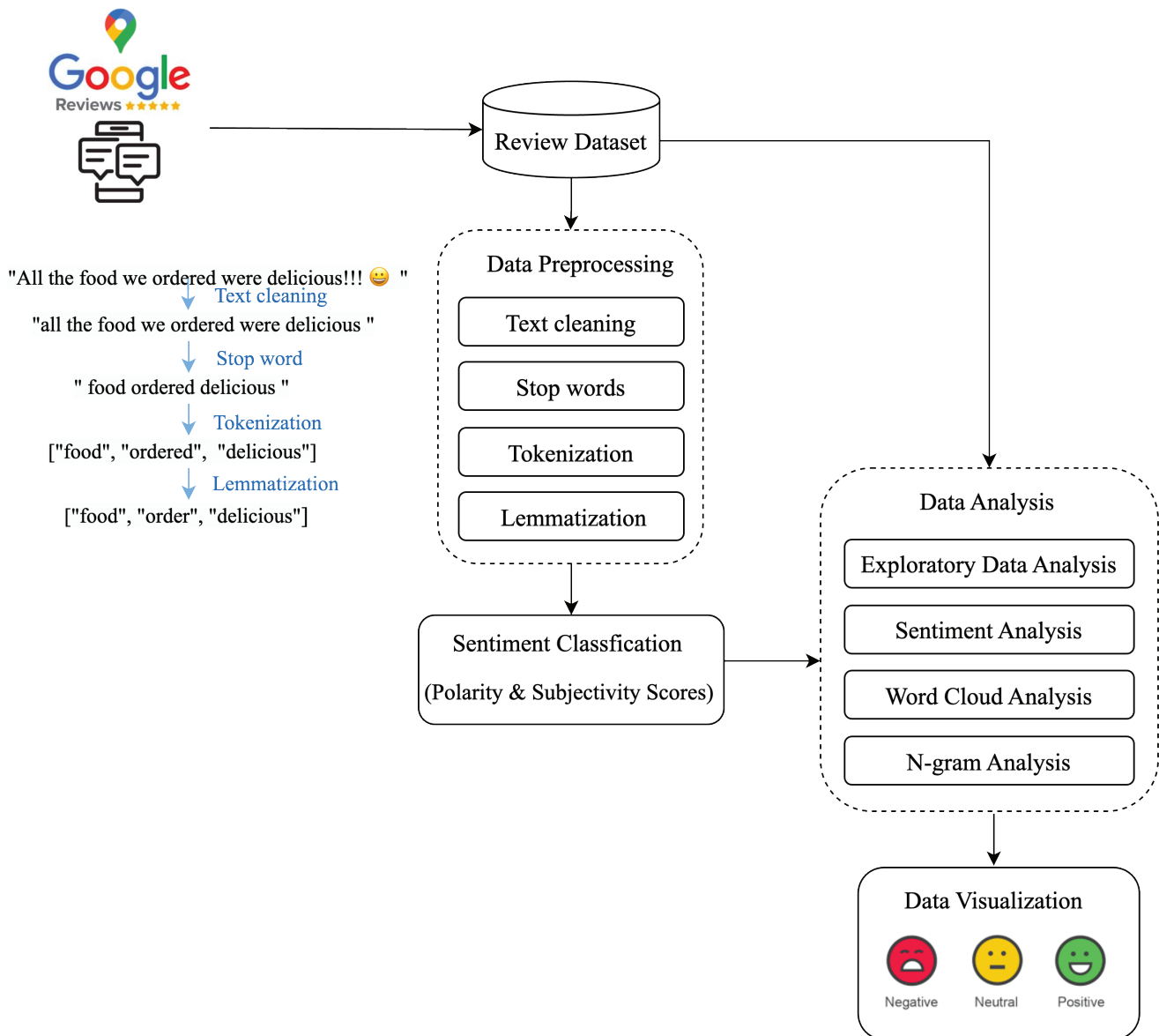
Qualitative data analysis software, such as Nvivo or MaxQDA, has also been employed as a research method to explore the sentiments (Santos et al., 2022; Sánchez et al., 2022; Saura et al., 2018; Saura et al., 2019). For example, Saura et al. (2019) performed sentiment analysis to identify key factors in UGC on Twitter for the development of successful startups and Santos et al. (2022) analysed Airbnb users' experiences in a Brazilian tourist destination.

3. METHOD

This research analyses Google Local Guide reviews to study online opinions of travellers' food experiences. The study focuses on dining experiences posted in reviews in Ayutthaya city, Thailand. Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya or Ayutthaya is chosen in this research because it is a popular destination in Thailand for both foodies and tourists due to many restaurants, food markets, floating markets, night markets, and outstanding street delicacies (see Appendix 1). The Ancient City of Ayutthaya is a significant cultural site in Thailand, and it has been a UNESCO World Herit-age Site since 1991 (UNESCO, 2023). Along with its outstanding historical attractions, Ayutthaya's traditional cui-sine highlights its unique culture and history. Around 8 million tourists visited Ayutthaya in 2018, making it one of Thailand's most famous tourist destinations (Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, 2018). Besides, Ayutthaya has been recently selected by Michelin Guide as one of five prominent gastronomic cities in Thailand (Michelin Guide, 2021).

The methodology of the sentiment classification system used in the study, we performed the script programmed in Python coding language. The researcher processes data using Colaboratory (Google Colab) as the software. The Python Programming language was coded through Google Colab for data analysis (Google, 2021). The reason we chose Google Colab for running Python models is that it is a free Jupyter notebook in the cloud created by Google. Another attractive feature is that Google Colab supports many machine learning libraries that are simple to load in the notebook. The research scheme begins with data collection from Google Maps reviews described in Section 2.1. Next, the procedure of data preparation was conducted as presented in section 2.2. Finally, section 2.3 details the evolution of NLP-based sentiment analysis performed in the study. The methodology applied in the study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The process diagram of the proposed solution.



Source: Own elaboration

2.1. Review of Dataset and Data Collection

The data in this study was collected from Google Local Guide platform by searching key terms and using web-scraping techniques. The extracted data is saved in an unstructured CSV file with the following information of each comment: name of the food location, place coordinates, global place rating, review rating, review date, number of likes, link to review images, and textual comment.

In order to select the comments, the first key term searched in Google Maps is “restaurants or cafes” and the zip code of Ayutthaya city is introduced to filter the ones located in this area. Then, in order to find the websites of the seven famous landmarks related to food events, the following terms are searched: “food market”, “street food market”, and “floating market”. These seven gastronomic landmarks are: the Ayutthaya Floating Market, the Krung Si Ayutthaya Market, the Ayutthaya Night Market, the Bang Ian Night Market, the Chao Phrom Market, the Ayutthaya central shrimp market (Talat Klang Market), and the Ayutthaya Municipal Market (Na Wang Market). Finally, 35,001 comments were retrieved and grouped into two separate datasets. The first dataset of 22,516 posts contains reviews posted before the COVID-19 pandemic, from January 1st, 2016, until January 12th, 2020, while the second set of 12,485 posts contains reviews shared during the COVID-19 pandemic from January 13th, 2020 until August 18th, 2022. The data are divided in this way because on January 13th the Ministry of Public Health declared the first case in Thailand and people began to perceive the risk derived from this (Plipat, 2020).

2.2. Data pre-processing

Python programming language was used to prepare the raw data in this step. The primary libraries imported for data pre-processing were Pandas (to put text data into data frames), NumPy (to create number sequences), and Matplotlib (to visualise the data). The data pre-processing stage is similar to the data transformation technique in that it cleans and prepares text data before feeding it to the natural language algorithm (see Figure 1 and Table 2). NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) for natural language processing was mainly used in this study. In the first step, all of the gathered reviews from Google maps were transformed into a data frame. The dataset from the first extraction was cleaned by removing any punctuations, numbers, website links, and emojis in the text. Moreover, the re-trieved terms were converted to lowercase letters. Stop word removal was then launched using a stop word list by the NLTK corpus package. Stop words are used to filter out closed words without lexical meaning in the text analysis (e.g. “a”, “the”, “I”, “is”, “are”, “and”, “of”, “for”, “about”) (Hickman et al., 2020). In the next step, the reviews were broken down into words and each word was stored individually for further use in an analysis called “tokenisation”. Tokenisation refers to the process of splitting a sentence, or text into a list of single words or “tokens” that can be considered as discrete units (Banks et al., 2018). Lastly, Lemmatization is carried out. It is an efficient pre-processing technique that enhances model performance by analysing the word morphology and reducing words to its lemma (Ahuja et al., 2019). In other words, the aim of lemmatisation is to inflect words to their common roots (e.g. came to come, eats to eat). The Spacy lemmatiser function, a popular NLP system, was used to perform word transformation in this step. Figure 1 and Table 2 present the overview and examples of the preprocessing stage.

Table 2: Example of output of preprocessing stage

Review	Text cleaning	Stop word	Tokenisation	Lemmatisation
Small restaurant but good taste of all menu. Add on wine buffet go great with all menu.	small restaurant but good taste of all menu add on wine buffet go great with all menus	small restaurant good taste menu add wine buffet go great menu	[small, restaurant, good, taste, menu, add, wine, buffet, go, great, menu]	[small, restaurant, good, taste, menu, add, wine, buffet, go, great, menu]
5 stars for both the food and the service, the food is excellent I actually came to Ayudhya for this very purpose. The service is excellent and the owner is very friendly. Strongly recommended!	stars for both the food and the service the food is excellent i actually came to ayudhya for this very purpose the service is excellent and the owner is very friendly strongly recommended	stars food service food excellent came ayudhya purpose service excellent owner friendly strongly recommended	[stars, food, service, food, excellent, came, ayudhya purpose, service, excellent, owner, friendly, Strongly, recommended]	[stars, food, service, food, excellent, come, ayudhya purpose, service, excellent, owner, friendly, Strongly, recommend]
Over pricing (expensive), so so taste.	over pricing expensive so so taste	pricing expensive taste	[pricing, expensive, taste]	[price, expensive, taste]

2.3. Data Analysis

After cleaning the text, exploratory data analysis reveals insights about the datasets. The statistical description of the two datasets is computed. Next, sentiment analysis uncovers the emotional direction behind the words. The TextBlob text processing library for natural language processing was then used to classify sentiments as positive, negative, or neutral. The TextBlob library provides the rules-based sentiment score function. TextBlob gives a text’s polarity and subjectivity scores for sentiment

classification. Reviews with polarity are determined as positive, negative, or neutral sentiments based on polarity scores. Text is defined by a value in the range [-1 = negative, 0 = neutral, +1 = positive]. The level of subjectivity can reveal which reviews contain personal opinions and feelings rather than facts [0 = objective, 1 = very subjective].

Table 3 illustrates an example of the sentiment output automatically computed by this procedure. Then, the word cloud module is carried out to visually represents the frequency of words contained in the reviews. Word cloud is a graphical representation of text data in the form of tags. The relative importance of individual frequency words in the textual contents is indicated by their size and colour. Thus, the word cloud package in python is imported to generate customised word clouds. In the following step, the N-gram model is used for feature extraction in sentiment analysis (Avinash & Sivasankar, 2019). In technical terms, the N-gram model is considered as a bag-of-words feature that involves collecting the occurrence of words from given speeches based on a contiguous sequence of n words. For example, for the sentence “Thai food delicious”, if n = 1 (called unigrams), then the N-grams are “Thai” while if n = 2 (called bigrams), then the n-grams are “Thai food”. If n = 3 (called trigrams), then the N-grams are “Thai food delicious”. To generate the N-gram model, the CountVectorizer method is used to reform the corpus of tokens, or individual words, into a matrix form of N-gram counts. In this process, we employ the CountVectorizer package from the Python scikit-learn library to build the matrix of token counts. With the bigram model, different terms were grouped to identify the main dimensions of sharing food experiences on Google Maps reviews. In order to answer the three research questions of the study, all these analyses (i.e. TextBlob Sentiment Analysis, Word clouds, word frequencies, N-gram models) are combined together.

Table 3: Example of sentiment analysis from Google Maps reviews

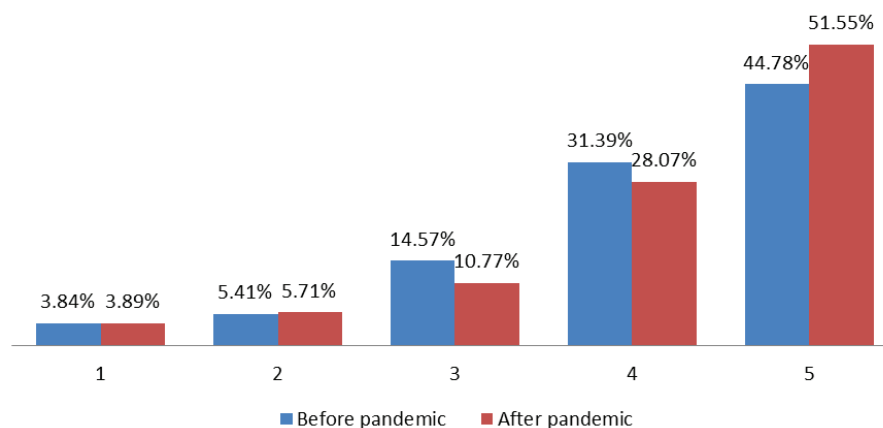
Review	Subjectivity	Polarity	Sentiment
1. Small restaurant but good taste of all menu. Add on wine buffet go great with all menu.	0.583	0.417	Positive
2. 5 stars for both the food and the service, the food is excellent I actually came to Ayudhyafor this very purpose. The service is excellent and the owner is very friendly. Strongly recommended !	0.631	0.52	Positive
3. Over pricing (expensive), so so taste.	0.7	-0.5	Negative
4. Location and ambience was good. Workers were so nice. About tastes of meals was exaggerated. Not extreme delicious. Just ordinary foods. Prices was high	0.806	0.253	Positive
5. The shop is a little hot. But I can sit and rest and take in the atmosphere	0.45	0.083	Neutral

3. RESULTS

3.1. Statistical Description

Review lengths and word count results reveal online user behaviour related to sharing food experiences on social media. In the 35,001 reviews on food experiences on Google Local Guides, people usually write feedback of approximately 98 characters, including text, emojis, and symbols. Most reviews have an average of 17 words. Figure 2 presents the rating scores given by customers in studies. Remarkably, the average ratings given in reviews before and during the pandemic are both above 4 (4.06 and 4.16, respectively). Most people who had food experiences in Ayutthaya gave a score of 5.0, meaning they were delighted with their experiences at the destination. The unexpected finding was that despite concern about hygiene and social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people gave establishments higher ratings than before the pandemic. However, there was only a slight difference in percentages between the two situations.

Figure 2: Review rating comparison of food experiences given in reviews before and during the pandemic

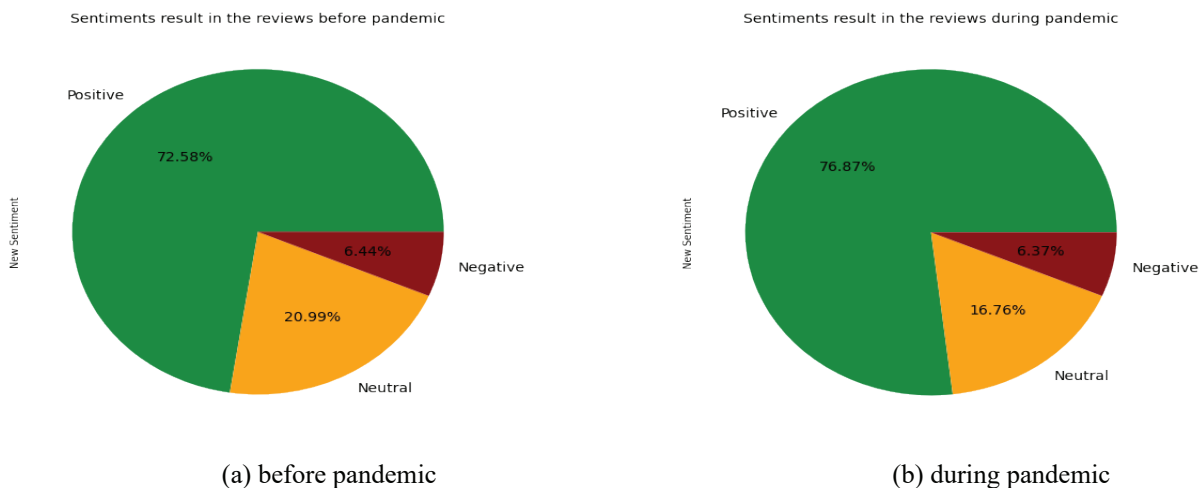


Source: Own elaboration

3.2. Sentiment analysis

Figure 3 presents the sentiment polarity obtained based on the score in reviews. The polarity is classified into positive, neutral, or negative sentiment for the whole period. Most customers have a positive attitude about food experiences, followed by neutral and negative feelings, respectively. Regarding public opinion related to food events before the pandemic, 72.58% of the reviews expressed positive sentiment, followed by the neutral feeling (20.99%) and the negative sentiment (6.44%) (Figure 3a). This is consistent with tourists' sentiment trends for food reviews during the pandemic. During the pandemic, the number of positive reviews increased to 76.87%. In contrast, neutral views fell to 16.76%. In a similar trend, negative sentiment slightly decreased (6.37%) in a reflection of attitudes about food activity during the pandemic (Figure 3b). When compared, the overall results of the two sentiment datasets are interesting. There was no statistically significant difference in all three sentiments in the reviews before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates that customers visiting Ayutthaya frequently expressed satisfaction with their food experience during both periods.

Figure 3: Comparison of sentiment polarity on review data toward food experiences



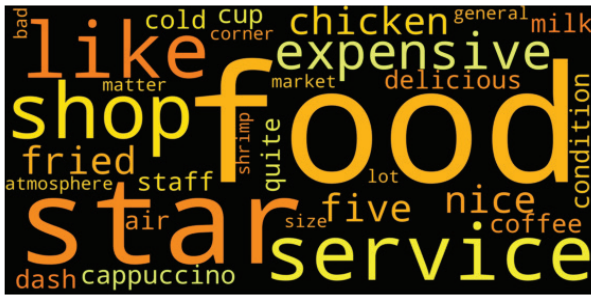
Source: Own elaboration

3.3. Word cloud analysis

After a sentiment analysis, word cloud analysis was applied to explain the further sentiment results by extracting the most frequency of terms in reviews. Figure 4 shows word cloud outputs widely posted on Google Maps reviews related to food experiences before and during the COVID-19 outbreak. Before COVID-19, the leading terms of positive sentiment are “food”, “good”, “fresh”, “shrimp”, “delicious”, etc. (see Figure 4a). Similarly, some positive keywords are found to be the same before and during COVID-19, comprising “food”, “good”, “fresh”, “shrimp”, “delicious”, etc. (see Figure 4b). In term of neutral sentiment on food experiences, before COVID-19 is characterised by “food”, “star”, “service”, “shop”, “like”, etc. (see Figure 4c), whereas the top words during the pandemic are “shrimp”, “food”, “eat”, “go”, “think”, etc. (see Figure 4d). No similar terms are found in the case of neutral sentiment, except for “food”. Word cloud results of the negative sentiment that characterised the food experiences before the pandemic include “service”, “taste”, “hot”, “chicken”, “large”, etc. (see Figure 4e), while during the pandemic, different keywords with negative sentiment can be found, namely “expensive”, “price”, “taste”, “issue”, “matter”, etc. (see Figure 4f).

Figure 4 The distribution of word clouds towards food experiences before and during the pandemic

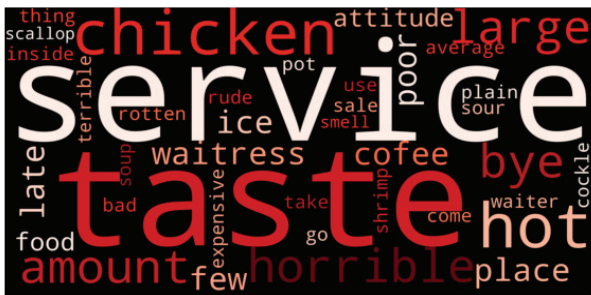




(c) neutral before the pandemic



(d) neutral during the pandemic



(e) negative before the pandemic



(f) negative during the pandemic

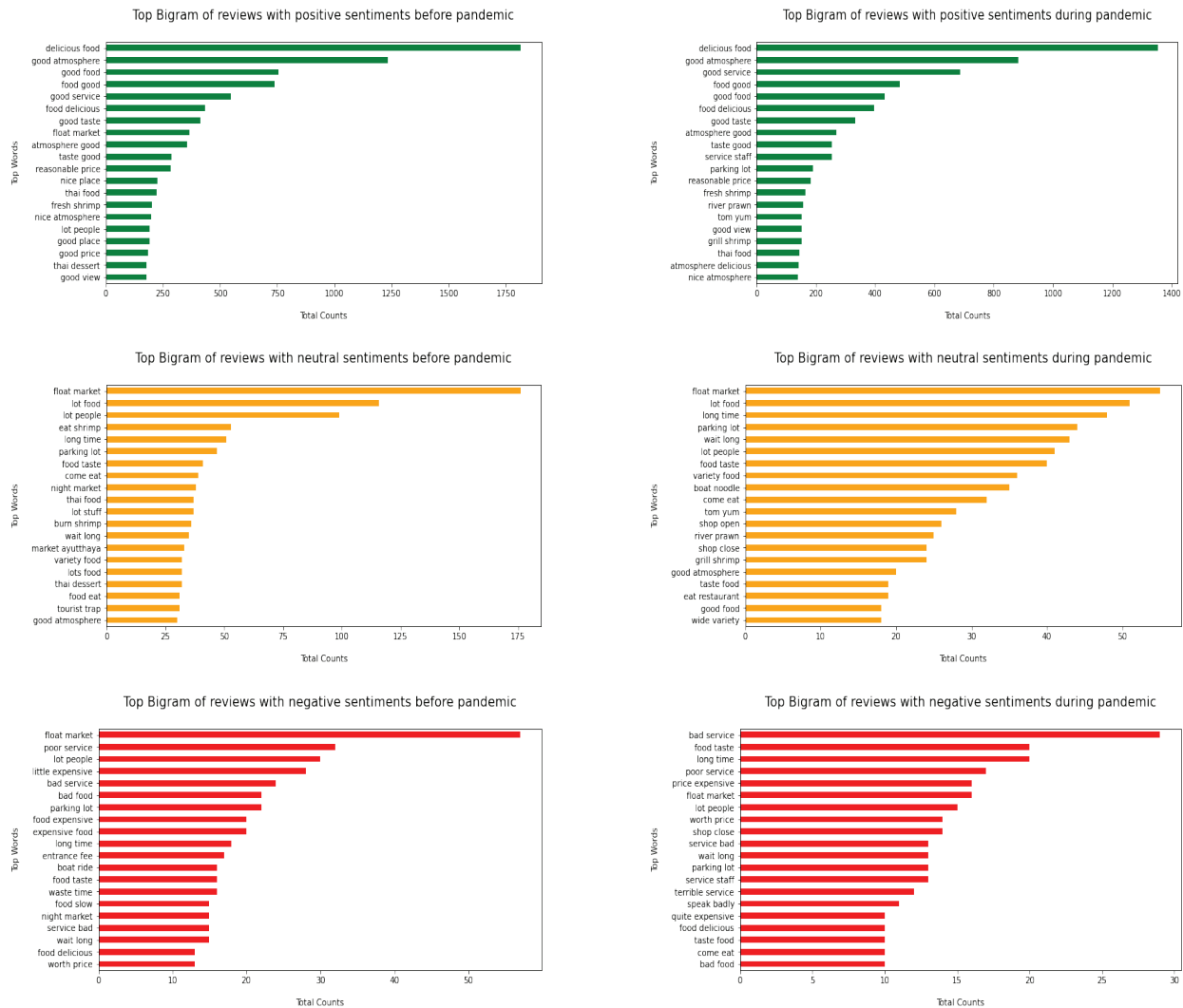
Source: Own elaboration

The intriguing aspect of these findings is that the travellers tended to be satisfied with food in destinations even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The finding pointed out that consumers favoured dishes like shrimp and seafood for their freshness and flavour. These results were consistent with the fact that fresh fish and river prawns are popular local dishes for foodies visiting Ayutthaya. The results also reveal that, besides the food, the quality of service and the ambience also make significant impressions on customers, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This would be due to intense competition among food businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak. Without neglecting hygiene, businesses look for policies that increase trust and reflect customers' concerns. Customer service strategies become a solution to the problem of recovering business. Businesses are becoming more conscious of the importance of service quality. This is obvious in the pre-pandemic result that service implies dissatisfaction with food experiences. Another critical word cloud result, price, is detected to be unpleasant as inexpensive, which business owners need to take into account. When consumers express their dissatisfaction online, it is possible that they will include information that can be useful to the owners of the businesses. This is because understanding the root causes of customer complaints can be a powerful tool in determining in which order to address issues.

3.4. Bigram analysis

Bigram analysis provides empirical output to support the opinions expressed in the review. The N-gram model is applied to evaluate the research approach. According to the findings, the bigrams work better than the other N-grams because two consecutive words give a better view to describe each sentiment (Ahuja et al., 2019). Bigram analysis helps to observe the principal terms that customers often mention in their comments (Srivastava et al., 2019). The sentiment outputs aggregated into the same polarity class from the previous section identified trends in co-occurring and correlated words for the proximity context around each word. The findings provided the research-ers with information that assisted them in determining the underlying terms that exist in the reviews of food experi-ences at the destination. The tendency of food experience sentiment mentioned in the reviews is classified as de-picted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: **Bigram analysis of the review text**

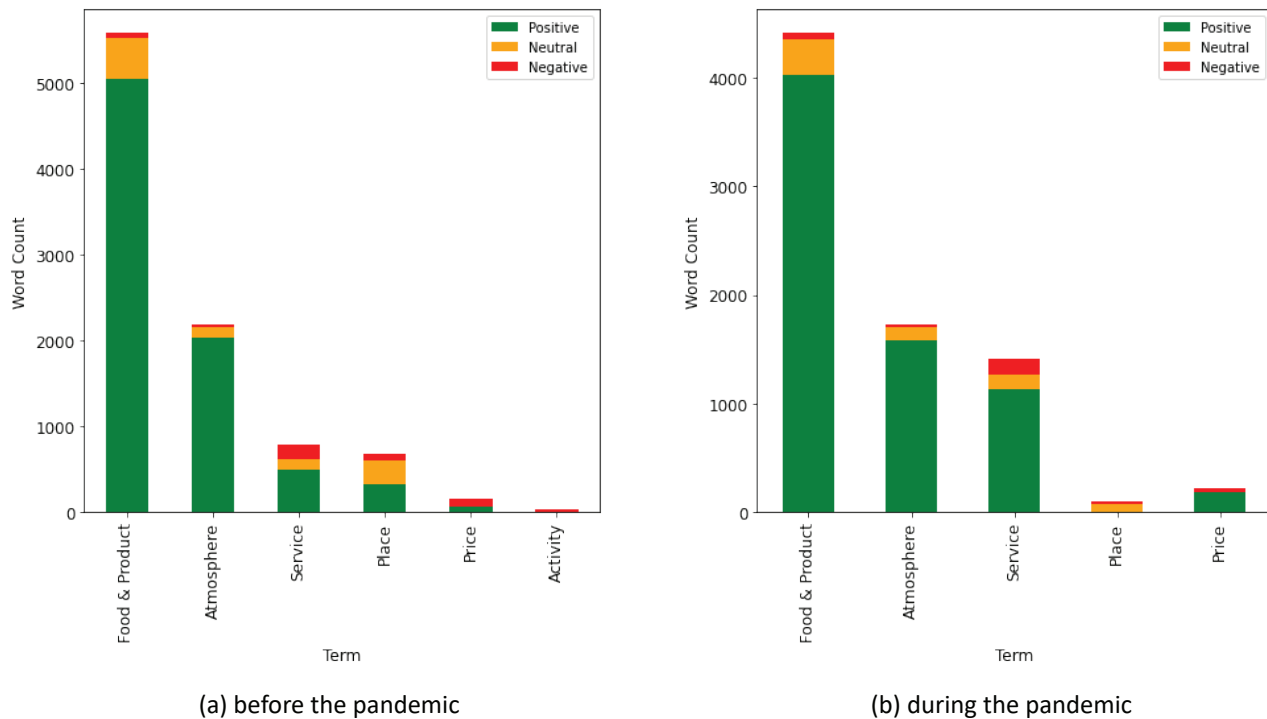


Source: Own elaboration

Throughout the bigram results, several terms were grouped to identify the crucial dimensions of sharing food experiences on Google Maps reviews (Figure 6). According to review data of tourists in Ayutthaya collected before COVID-19, there are six groups of sharing food experience aspects (summarised in Figure 6a). Reviews of food and products (e.g., “delicious food”, “good food”, “fresh shrimp”, “variety food”) are what people mostly share in a positive way on Google Local Guides, followed by atmosphere (e.g., “nice atmosphere”, “good atmosphere”, “lot people”, “good view”), service (e.g., “parking lot”, “good service”, “bad service”, “wait long”), and place (e.g., “float market”, “nice place”, “night market”). Price (e.g., “good price”, “reasonable price”, “quite expensive”) and activity (e.g., “boat ride”).

Compared with the bigram result during the pandemic, food and product (e.g., “delicious food”, “good food”, “Tom Yum”, “Thai food”), atmosphere (e.g., “good atmosphere”, “good view”, “nice atmosphere”), and service (e.g., “good service”, “service staff”, “terrible service”) are still the main dimensions of sharing food experiences at destinations (Figure 6b). It is noteworthy that the term service is mentioned much more frequently during the pandemic than prior to it. The topics of price (e.g., “price expensive”, “worth price”) and place (e.g., “float market”, “eat restaurant”) are discussed in smaller proportions. Posting regarding the activities in the reviews is not found as the main topic during the pandemic. It is surprising that the topic of food-related activities does not appear. Four dimensions – food and product, atmosphere, service, and price – have a positive valence, while the term place seems to tend to neutral to negative valence.

Figure 6: The proposed concept of sharing food experiences:



Source: Own elaboration

4. DISCUSSION

Examining reviews left by users on Google Local Guides helps to understand the tourists' sentiments towards food experiences in tourism destinations. According to the results of sentiment analysis and sentiment polarity, and answering RQ1 (What are the travellers' sentiments towards food experiences found in Google Maps reviews?), the reviews by users of food-related activity on Google Local Guides mainly represent positive emotions. This is in the same line with previous research, indicating that positive emotions rank highest across all restaurant categories (Renganathan & Upadhy, 2021). The study's findings provide credence to the hypothesis put up by Islam et al. (2021) or Sangkaew & Zhu (2022), that travellers are more likely to talk favourably than negatively about their dining experiences or their food market experiences, respectively. This may be due to tourists' satisfaction with culinary activities motivating them to share their experiences on social media (Yang, 2017).

The word cloud and N-gram analyses reinforce each other to clearly describe the key elements of the food experience in online reviews to answer RQ2 (What are the major attributes of food experiences that people share on online reviews?). This research develops a sentiment analysis approach to explore multidimensional terms frequently found for reviewing food experiences on the Google Maps platform. The empirical results establish six major dimensions of sharing food experiences on Google Maps reviews that are contrasted with previous literature on the topic, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of food experience dimensions

Dimension	Words	Description in previous literature*
Food / Menu / Product	Food (e.g., TomYum, shrimp, seafood), dessert, beverages, the variety of food, tastes, and food quality	Food quality, food tastes, packaging and portions, food attractiveness.
Physical environment / Ambience characteristics	Environment, atmosphere, ambience, clean, construction, dirty, surrounding, tidy, wide, decoration, view, and smell	Characteristics of the physical environment, such as health and cleanliness.
Service	Employee, waiter, staff, agent people, parking, time, close, open, speak, wait, service and slow	Service quality, staff proficiency.
Place / location / setting	Eating establishments, restaurants, shops, and markets.	Where the food experience takes place.
Price / value for money	Price, fee, expensive, cheap	Evaluation on the value for money of the food.

Dimension	Words	Description in previous literature*
Activity	Type of other activity participation (e.g., cruising, boat, elephant ride)	Touristic elements; entertainment; activities linked to the food experience.
Social atmosphere	-	Social factors; Cultural and Local experiences; tradition and authenticity; companions; occasion; interaction

*See Table 1 for references.

First, theme “food and product”, which represents the variety of food and products, food tastes, and food quality (Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Stone et al., 2018) is the topic that travellers most frequently comment in the reviews. This is logical as the food is the main element of these experiences. The food and product attributes are mainly mentioned in positive comments and followed by the neutral feedback. This reflects that the most crucial criterion in users’ perception is the element linked to the food (Alqadi et al., 2020). The factor of taste/quality is found to have a positive effect on tourists’ attitudes toward local food (Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020). Thus, the perception of taste and quality is a crucial factor that tourists use to explain how they enjoy their food activities (Choe & Kim, 2019).

Second, “atmosphere” is frequently mentioned when describing experiences. Physical environment factors are often considered in research on gastronomic tourism (Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021; Pattanapokinsakul & Phakdee-auksorn, 2015; Privitera et al., 2018). This is probably because most tourists are motivated to visit food destinations by the unique atmosphere of the places where they experience them (Pattanapokinsakul & Phakdee-auksorn, 2015; Privitera et al., 2018). Additionally, atmosphere related to food experiences (Chi et al., 2013) plays a significant role in food satisfaction and tourists’ behavioural intentions. Results of this study also support the fact that atmosphere is one of the most prevalent topics in positive reviews, which indicates higher satisfaction levels derived from this dimension.

Third, “service” dimension is also addressed in the comments. Positive service refers to being service-minded and friendly, while negative service indicates the opposite, terrible customer service. The quality of service is one of the critical elements of a memorable food experience affecting restaurant satisfaction (Stone et al., 2018). Alqadi et al. (2020) support the conclusion that service is one of the top three attributes on the tourist satisfaction scale.

Fourth, “place” dimension refers to the eating establishments and local markets, such as floating markets and night markets. Visiting food attractions such as local markets, food festivals, restaurants, and unique places to taste special dishes is a typical tourist behaviour (Privitera et al., 2018). The term place is mostly associated with optimism before the pandemic. However, place-related reviews after the pandemic tend to highlight negative experiences. Tourists are curious to taste local food when they travel (Kim & Eves, 2012) but, as we can see in the results of this study, if this experience is constrained, it may affect the location evaluation.

Fifth, “price” is an important element in motivating and influencing customers’ purchasing decisions. The food prices attract tourists to different destinations because they are reasonable, fair, good for value, etc. For example, street food is well known all over the world for its affordable prices (Jeaheng & Han, 2020). In tourists’ behavioural models, it is proved that the price component directly affects the quality perception of the product or service by consumers (Forgas-Coll et al., 2012), in line with what is found in this study, where text references to price are directly linked to both positive or negative opinions.

Sixth, the term “activity” relates to the travellers’ experience gained from food tourism such as activities while visiting local markets, floating markets, or street food as well as a tour with dinner on a local river cruise. The dimension of posting relevant activity was mentioned and supported by previous research (Wong et al., 2020). This indicator refers to participating in various forms of entertainment activities with food and beverage and tourism. Sharing activities on social media while travelling is confirmed by Javed et al. (2021), as they found that uploading or sharing any activities on online communities is a form of self-expression. However, compared with the food experiences during the pandemic, this feature was largely absent from online review sharing during the pandemic. This may be a result of Thailand’s suspension of certain tourism activities at the beginning period of COVID-19. To revitalise activities related to food tourism, this opportunity should be taken to promote gastronomic activities in Ayutthaya, such as food festivals, street food or food tours. The factors of taste/quality, value, and price value have a positive effect on tourists’ attitudes toward local food (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020), while the foodscape dimension, consisting of elements like place, atmospherics, food image, and cultural society have a significant role in building up better food memories (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019). Thus, the author recommends considering these elements for further research to develop and comprehend the gastronomic tourism content.

Finally, in this study, no dimension on social atmosphere has been separately defined as it happens in previous literature (Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Kleinhans et al., 2016; Stone et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2020). However, this social atmosphere is directly linked and mentioned in the text from other dimensions. For example, in the physical environment dimension, there is also a reference to social interaction and behaviour during these experiences. Thus, in an indirect way, the social component of food consumption is also considered to be relevant in this study.

In order to answer RQ3 (Are there differences in opinions about food experiences before and after COVID-19 re-restrictions were eased and allowed them again?), a comparison of the sentiments expressed in texts in these two periods is carried out. Findings suggest that, even during the pandemic, more people gave positive than negative ratings to food destinations. Although the pandemic had a significant impact on consumers' food behaviour (Fountain, 2022), we still see that the positive comments outnumber the negative ones. In addition, if we compare the dimensions included in comments before and after the pandemic, we can also see some differences. For example, there is an increase of the proportion of words linked to the service dimension. Due to the fact that service strategies have been implemented in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on food experiences (Tuomi et al. 2021), it is important to notice that tourists also report more about services since the pandemic emerged. Conversely, there is a decrease of mentions linked to the place. This may be due to the fact that, due to closures and restrictions, the place where they eat the food is not as important. For example, for some time after the declaration of the pandemic, food consumption needed to be outdoors and social distancing should be maintained, so takeaway options and street food consumption was replaced in market and restaurant food consumption.

5. IMPLICATIONS

For theoretical contributions, the major findings of this study provide significant contributions to the current literature in several aspects. First, the research advances the literature on the tourist behaviour of sharing experiences on social media. The study is not only positive experiences but also negative perceptions of dining experiences by classifying sentiment categories. Also, the underlying dimensions of what people share about their experiences with others on social platforms were examined.

Second, the empirical evidence of differences between online reviews about food experiences before and during the COVID-19 crisis is exposed in this study. The modern technologies of sentiment analysis in the study can be a potential tool to accelerate the timely development of understanding tourist opinions and emotions towards destinations in the event of an epidemic.

Third, we also highlight the conceptual attributes of food experiences that people share on Google Local Guide review to the literature of tourism, while many scholars have commonly investigated reviews from online platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and TripAdvisor. Sentiment analysis in hospitality and tourism, Big data from the Google Local Guides platform, has presently not received much attention (Mehraliyev et al., 2022). We, therefore, encourage future research to concern this platform as a powerful resource for data analysis.

Fourth, the article develops novel Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques by using sentiment analysis, enhanced with n-gram analysis, and word clouds to diagnose the sentiments of travellers' perceptions posting in online reviews, whereas the existing literature refers to sharing food experiences by content analysis and thematic analysis approach (Wang et al., 2017). This is due to these technologies can facilitate the prompt understanding of customers' sentiments and perceptions.

Moreover, this finding demonstrated how useful NLP techniques could be used not only to observe single words, but also to reveal how words are related to each other. With the aid of N-grams feature, we can determine which words frequently follow one another in a sentence or find co-occurrences and correlations between words that frequently follow one another. Evidently, using bigrams can explore a deeper understanding of the context of the sentiment direction. It can be novel knowledge for tourism scholars and practitioners to apply in future research because the analysis was done using Google's Colab, which is a freely accessible cloud service. NLP capabilities can be applied to other tourism research topics to observe tourists' behaviour and their attitude toward the brand image.

The research provides some important practical implications for tourism marketing. As part of the national strategy promoting gastronomic tourism, the insights provided can help the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and local tourism organisations to assess travellers' sentiments and to understand the critical elements to increase tourists' satisfaction in Ayutthaya. Given the tourism potential of local food, the TAT has published a campaign to highlight and promote gastronomic tourism (Sritama, 2018). The TAT (2019) plans to use food as a tourism marketing strategy to promote local destinations. To develop gastronomic tourism in Thailand under the TAT policy, it is necessary to create a positive tourism experience for tourists and to understand which elements contribute to increasing tourist satisfaction with their food experiences. Therefore, a comprehensive and detailed grasp of food experiences in Ayutthaya is required.

In addition, it can also contribute to business strategies for improving products and services by guiding potential brand image. Thus, the technique of opinion mining applied in this study helps all businesses, not only the tourism industry, to predict customer needs.

6. CONCLUSION

Findings of this study confirm that food is a key component in tourism destinations and it contributes to visitor experiences. They specifically reveal that: (1) users tend to share their positive food experiences rather than negative ones; (2) Results summarise six critical attributes of sharing food experiences in reviews, consisting of food and product, atmosphere, service,

place, price, and activity; and (3) by comparing before and after Covid-19 periods, some differences are identified. In spite of the existing literature on food experiences and eWOM, this article is innovative in different ways. First, it goes further in the understanding of food experiences as it is not limited to restaurant establishments, but it also includes street food consumption in night markets, street food stalls, etc.

Second, due to the recency of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the previous studies have not considered its effects on UGC or have only examined the behaviour after the pandemic, without comparing it with what was commented before. Prior research to analyse online reviews has not produced evidence to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food travel experiences. Greater understanding and insights into consumer sentiment evolution regard-ing COVID-19 pandemic are still lacking (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2022).

Third, this study uses sentiment analyses and NLP to explore people's views toward food experiences in a tourist destination. These methods have been recently used in other tourism fields, such as hotels, but it is quite new to evaluate food experiences. Fourth, Google Local Guide is used as the source of data and its potential is acknowl-edged not only in terms of the number of reviews found on the platform but also the data elements that it includes (e.g., coordinates, number of likes, photos linked, etc.).

The study's limitation is that reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic were unbalanced in the review dataset due to the lockdown. The dataset during the pandemic was collected in just a short period. The impact of the lockdown in Thailand affected the small number of reviews as food restaurants and food businesses were temporarily closed. Furthermore, one of the apparent limitations of using the bigram approach is the existence of the same set of terms but different positions (for example, 'good food' and 'food good'). This can happen as bigram considers contiguous sequence words that often appear together (Liu, 2012). This research collected data from a single platform (Google Local Guide). In further work, the different data sources of food experience reviews, such as TripAdvisor and Twit-ter, might be compared to investigate the main attributes of food experience reviews.

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Please cite this article as:

Poyoi, P., Gassiot-Melian, A. & Coromina, L. (2023). Local food experiences before and after COVID-19: A sentiment analysis of eWOM. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 29(4), 477-493, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.29.4.1>



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Appendix 1: Examples of food tourism in the study area



a) street food



b) local market



c) night market



d) floating market

Source: Google Maps platform

ARTICLE 2

Exploring Travellers' Motivations for Sharing Food Experiences Online

Exploring traveller's motivation for sharing food experiences online: The case of Ayutthaya, Thailand

ABSTRACT

Social media has evolved into a powerful influence in consumer decision making and a place where many travellers check online reviews or comments before deciding where to eat. As an increasing number of people share their dining experiences on social media, it is important to understand the underlying motives that lead tourists to post food experiences there. The aim of this study is to investigate the motivations that lead tourists to share food experiences on social media. Data were collected from 443 travellers who shared food experiences in Ayutthaya, Thailand. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the underlying motivational dimensions, which were then empirically validated through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Four key motivations were obtained: social recognition, perceived enjoyment, self-achievement and altruism. Consequently, governments, entrepreneurs and other concerned organisations should consider these indicators to develop more specific and effective marketing strategies for gastronomic tourism products..

Keywords Sharing food experiences, motivation, social media, Thailand, factor analysis

Introduction

Social media has become an almighty force in the tourism industry, particularly in the customer's decision-making process. Currently, a substantial number of online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have being generated through various online social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TripAdvisor, etc. (Hu et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2013; Šormaz & Ruoss, 2023). The evolution of the digital and the Internet has altered not only how individuals plan their trips but also how they share their travel experiences with others from around the world (Kucharczuk et al., 2022). The travel-related experiences posted on social platforms present direct

authority about the tourist destination, products and services because people today trust eWOM and online reviews in user-generated content (UGC) more than classical advertising (Liu et al., 2018; Luong & Ho, 2023; Zhang et al., 2010).

Among the shared traveller experiences on social media, food as a key component of tourism have become highly talked about and shared content online (Liu et al., 2018; Sangkaew & Zhu, 2020). Focusing on sharing travel experiences about gastronomy, the digital revolution, and the growing influence of social media in our lives have profoundly changed the traditional food culture. People are turning to online media to search for information, read restaurant reviews and decide where to dine before going out. Subsequently, they also share their experiences with others. It is common for travellers to post of food and review in detail their dining experiences on social platforms (Javed et al., 2021; Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020; Yu & Margolin, 2023).

Concerning the growth of social media and its widespread use, it is crucial for marketers and practitioners in the tourism sector to comprehend the behaviour of travellers who share their food experiences on social media. To date, the topic related to sharing food experiences on social media have been recently taken an interest in researching various aspects, such as studying the dimensions of food experiences shared on online platforms (Atsız et al., 2022; Mathayomchan & Taecharungroj, 2020), sentiment analysis on food reviews (Laksono et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2021), the effects of online restaurant reviews (Aureliano-Silva et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022; Peng, Y., & Jemmott, J. B., 2018) and, particularly, the factors leading to the willingness to share and post food-themed content on social media (Javed et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2019; Yang, 2017).

Motivations are recognised as one of the key factors for behavioural intent in sharing travel experiences in the online community (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020; Sotiriadis, 2017). As motivations are the primary drivers of creating or sharing online content regarding travel experiences, it is imperative for travel providers and the tourism sectors to deeply understand the motives behind travellers' posting behaviour in order to optimise their marketing efforts and tourism policies. Regarding the motivation for sharing food experiences on social media, previous literature mainly focuses on specific contexts, such as foodstagramming

(Javed et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2019) or specific platforms, such as sharing restaurant experiences on Openrice.com (Yang, 2017). Existing studies on motivational dimensions for sharing food experiences on social media primarily employ qualitative methods, including in-depth interviewing approaches, netnographic studies, and bibliometric analyses (Mendini et al., 2019; Peng, 2019; Wang et al., 2016), whereas quantitative approaches to those motivational factors have largely been disregarded. Despite the existence of quantitative research studies, the exploration of the key dimensions of motivation to share food experiences on social media is limited because only certain factors are considered in predicting food experiences sharing in an online community (Lin et al., 2022; Yang, 2017).

More importantly, achieving a behavioural model with various observable indicators that effectively elucidate the underlying construct of social media is necessary (Atsız et al., 2022). To fill this gap, the purpose of this study is to test the dimensionality of motivations for tourist food experience sharing on social media. The motivation model with multidimensions will be investigated to explain why tourists motivate sharing food-related experiences on online networking. The items measuring those motivations will be categorised into different dimensions using quantitative methods.

Consequently, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights into understanding travellers' motivations for sharing food experiences in online communities. In particular, establishing the dimensionality of motivation to share food-related content during travel on social media contributes to a conceptual framework related to the gastronomic tourism and, hopefully, serve as a springboard for further research in this field. Furthermore, by clarifying the dimensions or factors of tourists' motivation for sharing food experiences on social media, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) or authorities will be able to improve targeted actions to increase motivation among potential visitors.

Literature review

To test the key components of motivation for tourists to share food experiences on social media, possible constructs were thoroughly examined through a literature study. Motivations are indispensable to understanding tourist behaviour and have been extensively studied in tourism research (Fodness, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Motivation is a significant psychological factor that triggers human decisions to take action. The degree of motivation may vary depending on environmental factors or individual characteristics (Maslow & Green, 1943). Most behaviours may be determined by multiple or all motivations simultaneously. Motivational factors have often been taken into account to gain insight into tourist behaviour (Kim & Eves, 2012; Lee, 2009; Pestana et al., 2020). Individual motivation has been found to be a crucial antecedent of behavioural intentions, particularly when it comes to the dissemination of product and service information (Daxböck et al., 2021; Fard & Saberi, 2015; Kakhki et al., 2019; Potti et al., 2023; Wang & Hou, 2015; Yang & Lai, 2011). In earlier research on sharing behaviour, different motivational scales were applied (Bae et al., 2017; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Daxböck et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2021; Lin & Huang, 2013; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Wong et al., 2020; Yang & Lai, 2011; Yi et al., 2018).

This study specifically considers motivations to share tourism experiences on social media. Four significant factors are reviewed and extracted from prior research to investigate these underlying motivations: social recognition (Daxböck et al., 2021; Kang and Schuett, 2013; Li, 2020; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Wang et al., 2016), perceived enjoyment (Kang and Schuett, 2013; Oliveira et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016), altruism (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Yang, 2017), and self-achievement (Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti, 2021; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020; Yang and Lai, 2011). In order to understand these four factors, Table 1 summarizes previous studies including them and the main results derived from this research.

Table 1 Motivation factors to share food experiences extracted from previous studies.

Authors (year)	Study context	Factors				Key findings
		Social recognition	Perceived enjoyment	Self- achievement	Altruism	
Daxböck et al. (2021)	Sharing travel photographs on Instagram	X	X	X		Self-efficacy and outcome expectations are found to be more influential than other factors in affecting users' motivations to share on Instagram.

Cheung and Lee (2012)	eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms	X			X	Reputation, sense of belonging, and enjoyment of helping other consumers significantly motivated consumers' eWOM intention.
Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti (2021)	Sharing festival experiences online		X	X	X	Some visitors solely focus on creating memories for themselves through social media while some try to share content that can benefit others, and others want to become influencers.
Kang and Schuett (2013)	Sharing travel experiences on social media	X	X			Identification and internalisation are crucial elements that contribute to a higher level of travel experience sharing on social media, mediated by the perceived enjoyment.
Munar and Jacobsen (2014)	Sharing tourism experiences on social media	X		X	X	Sharing user-generated content is associated with altruistic and community-related motivations.
Oliveira et al. (2020)	Sharing tourism experiences on social media		X	X	X	Perceived enjoyment is the main driving force for travellers to share their travel experiences on Facebook.
Wang et al. (2016)	Themes of food experience sharing on social network sites and their triggers	X	X	X		Motivations to share food experiences include the following dimensions: social and relational, self-image projection, emotion articulation, self-archiving, and information sharing.
Yang (2017)	Effects of restaurant satisfaction and knowledge sharing motivation on eWOM intentions				X	The altruistic motive is found to have a significant positive relationship with eWOM intention.

Yang and Lai (2011)	Sharing knowledge in Wikipedia	X	X	Internal self-concept-based motivation (i.e., personal achievement and self-efficacy) is a significant determinant of the motivation to influence the intention to share knowledge on Wikipedia.
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As seen in table 1, previous studies have considered different factors to predict motivation for sharing behaviour in general. First, social recognition is considered to be one of these underlying factors. Cheung and Lee (2012) demonstrated that reputation and sense of belonging were significantly related to spreading eWOM in online opinion platforms. Hsu and Lin (2008) proposed reputation as a critical determinant of users' intentions to participate in a blog. For Munar and Jacobsen (2014), the relevance community-related motivations is central to sharing tourism experiences through social media. Furthermore, tourists like to share images and update their experiences on social media during their trips, and they desire positive feedback from their friends, family or other group members by way of "likes" (Iványi & Bíró-Szigeti, 2021; Li, 2020). Given past research, social recognition would result as of the motivations for sharing food on social media. Thus, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Social recognition is an underlying factor of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.

Second, and regarding perceived enjoyment, it refers to the extent to which internet users participate in social networks because the activity "yields fun and enjoyment" (Hsu & Lin, 2008). These users are likely to engage in a social media-based activity because the interaction process is enjoyable (Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Writing reviews and posting photos related to the trip through social networking websites is perceived as entertaining and fun (Amaro et al., 2016; Iványi & Bíró-Szigeti, 2021; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Li et al., 2021). Oliveira et al. (2020), as an example, suggested that perceived enjoyment is the most significant motive for people to share their tourism experiences online. This research underscores the conclusion that people find compatible values on social media and share their travel experiences because they find it fun and enjoyable. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2. Perceived enjoyment is an underlying factor of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.

Third, the sense of personal or self-achievement was acknowledged as a crucial reason for sharing knowledge (Yang & Lai, 2011). Travellers frequently anticipate success from their participation on social media platforms, which fulfils an inner desire (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Therefore, the concept of goal achievement could be an important reason behind food experience-sharing behaviours. According to Javed et al. (2021) the following elements linked to the self were found to influence the willingness to post food photos on social media: self-expression, defined as letting others know what one eats and where one hangs out; “market mavenism”, understood as the consumers tendency to be especially involved in the marketplace and the shopping information considered (Goldsmith et al., 2006); and utilitarian attitudes, defined as making memories. In addition, Wong et al. (2019) identified self-expression as one of the main factors to explain the motivations and benefits of sharing food photos, while Abril et al. (2022) mentioned self-presentation as the primary motive behind food porn posting among Gen Z. Finally, Wang et al. (2016) included self-image projection and emotional articulation as key motives for travellers posting food-sharing experiences on social media sites. Consequently, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3. Self-achievement is an underlying factor of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.

Fourth, altruism is considered relevant to understand the motivations to share food experiences on social media. Cheung and Lee (2012) suggested that the enjoyment of helping other consumers is linked to the sharing behaviour on social media. Hsu and Lin (2008) included altruism as one of the most important motivational factors to participate in blogs. In their investigation, Zucco et al. (2020) identified motivations for sharing tourism experiences online, such as helping others, spurring others to travel and preserving memories. For Munar and Jacobsen (2014) being altruistic is also important when sharing tourism experiences online. Yang (2017) divided the motivational dimensions of sharing eWOM about food and restaurants into two

categories: egoistic and altruistic needs. Given this past research, altruism is considered as a motivation to share food on social media and the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 4. Altruism is an underlying factor of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.

To sum up the four formulated hypotheses, the research model of this study is depicted in Figure 1.

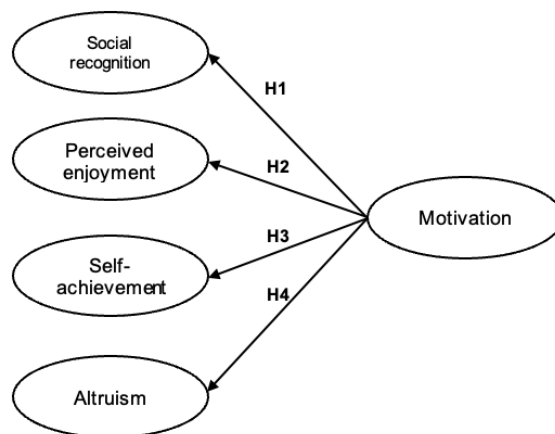


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Methodology

The survey instruments

For the purpose of this study, the items of motivation for sharing food experiences investigated in this study were reviewed and developed from the previous relevant literature (Feng & Harring, 2020; Jain et al., 2021; Kakhki et al., 2019; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Leung et al., 2013; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2020; Yang, 2017; Yang & Lai, 2011; Zucco et al., 2020). The most commonly motivational variables found in a general context of sharing behaviour were adapted for the measurement model in this study. The survey's items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning 'strongly disagree' and 7 meaning 'strongly agree'. In addition, the study provided demographic information about the tourists, including their gender, age, education levels, occupation status, and the most-used social platform.

The initial list of items based on prior research was refined and modified for content validity by six academics. A pilot test was then conducted with 50 participants, asking them about sharing their food experiences from their most recent trip. Consequently, the questionnaire was modified based on the pilot tests' results and feedback. Following the pre-test, the unclear and or ambiguous items were removed. Additionally, versions of the questionnaire were revised for the language used and linguistic equivalency by language specialists in English and Thai. Table 2 shows the version with the final 18 items for measuring the tourists' motivations to share food experiences.

Table 2 The motivation items modified from literature.

Motivation items	References
1. To expand the social relationship with other members by posting or reviewing	Munar and Jacobsen (2014)
2. To be socially recognised experience posted on social media	Munar and Jacobsen (2014)
3. To show others that I am experiencing food while travelling	Abril et al. (2022), Wang et al. (2016)
4. To be seen as an expert by sharing my food experience	Daxböck et al. (2021)
5. To receive 'Likes'	Li (2020)
6. To gain a sense of personal achievement	Yang and Lai (2011)
7. To remember my food experiences while travelling	Zucco et al. (2020)
8. To let people know that I am at the destination	Oliveira et al. (2020)
9. To improve my self-fulfillment	Oliveira et al. (2020)
10. To enjoy using social media to review my food experiences	Kang and Schuett (2013), Oliveira et al. (2020)
11. To have fun sharing my food experiences on social media	Kang and Schuett (2013), Oliveira et al. (2020)
12. To maintain social connections and friendships	Kang and Schuett (2013)
13. To enjoy replying to others who comment on my posts on websites/ social networks,	Kang and Schuett (2013)
14. To show others how much I have enjoyed my food experiences	Wang et al. (2016)
15. To promote restaurants or food attractions if I am satisfied with the food experiences and services	Munar and Jacobsen (2014)
16. To help others make better decisions, I write comments and reviews	Munar and Jacobsen (2014)
17. To help others find food recommendations, I share my food experience on social media	Cheung and Lee (2012)
18. To get replies from friends/others about my food tourism experience posted on social media	Cheung and Lee (2012)

Data collection and analysis methods

The sample frame of the study is the tourists who use social media to share their food experiences while travelling in Ayutthaya, Thailand. The questionnaire was collected in Thai and English versions and submitted to the questionnaires' platform. The survey was conducted at the entrances of well-known tourist attractions, including *Wat Mahathat* and *Wat Phra Mongkol Bophit* temple. The questionnaires were distributed from June 7 to July 5, 2022. Data was collected from 498 respondents using the convenience sampling method. Finally, a total of 443 valid questionnaires were retained for data analysis.

Data analyses were performed with SPSS 26 and Mplus statistical programs. This study begins by analysing descriptive statistics. To determine the initial factors, the data was analysed using explanatory factor analysis (EFA) with principal component analysis and the varimax rotation method.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then used to assess whether the factors or variables that were measured adequately represent the latent variables. A robust maximum likelihood procedure was used to estimate the measurement model. Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and hypothesised model reliability of the measurement model were also evaluated.

Results

Demographic profile

As seen in Table 3, overall, more than half participants were female (63.2%). Most respondents were young adults aged 18-29 years old (55.8%). A high percentage (64.6%) of participants hold at least a bachelor's degree, indicating they are well educated.

Regarding occupation, participants were mainly company employees (37.2%), following students (23.9%). Regarding social media platforms' preference for sharing food experiences, they mostly use Facebook (38%) and Instagram (24.9%).

Table 3 The demographic characteristics of the respondents (n = 443).

Category	Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	280	63.2
	Male	163	36.8
Age	Young adult (18 -29 years)	247	55.8
	Lower middle-aged (30 - 49 years)	173	39.1
	Upper middle-aged (50 - 64 years)	17	3.8
	Seniors (65 years and above)	6	1.4
Education level	Secondary school or less	52	11.8
	Undergraduate	286	64.6
	Master's and above	105	23.7
Occupation	Student	106	23.9
	Employee	165	37.2
	Own business	59	13.3
	Homemaker	15	3.4
	Retired	7	1.6
	Unemployed	26	5.9
	Public servant	65	14.7
Use of social media	Facebook	339	28
	Instagram	302	24.9
	Tiltok	94	7.8
	Line	149	12.3
	WhatsApp	77	6.4
	Youtube	68	5.6
	Twitter	58	4.8
	Goolgle Maps	41	3.4
	Travel blogs	19	1.6
	TripAdvisor	11	0.9
	Others	14	1.1

Exploratory factor analysis

In the results of EFA, items were sorted for each factorial dimensionality. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests determined the suitability of the data for EFA. As a result of the EFA, the value of KMO was 0.917, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant (p -value < 0.05). These results indicate that

performing factor analysis was appropriate (Hair et al., 2010). In the process of EFA, five indicators had factor loadings below 0.4 or cross-loaded on multiple factors and, hence, were eliminated. The factors of motivation are named according to the grouped items as follows: (1) social recognition (SOC), with three indicators; (2) perceived enjoyment (ENJ), with four indicators; (3) self-achievement (SEL), with three indicators; and (4) altruism (ALT), with three indicators. Each indicator has a loading value greater than 0.70. The questionnaire's reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Table 4 shows Cronbach's alpha four dimensions ranged from 0.699 to 0.872. All dimensions exceeded the acceptance criteria of 0.7, except for the last one, which was close to 0.7 (0.699). However, this value was still considered acceptable according to Hair et al. (2010), thereby indicating a good internal consistency level. The total variance, 68.92 percent was explained by the factors, with acceptable levels exceeding 50 percent.

Table 4 Exploratory factor analysis results.

Construct/items	Mean	SD	Factor loading	Cronbach's α
Social recognition				0.849
SOC1: To be seen as an expert by sharing my food experience	4.34	1.937	0.861	
SOC 2: To be socially recognised experience posted on social media	4.54	1.866	0.820	
SOC 3: To receive 'likes'	4.15	1.938	0.823	
Altruism				0.822
ALT1: To help others find food recommendations	5.31	1.552	0.803	
ALT2: To promote restaurants or food attractions	5.51	1.526	0.848	
ALT3: To help others make better decisions	5.42	1.612	0.873	
Perceived Enjoyment				0.872
ENJ1: To have fun sharing my food experiences on social media	5.46	1.509	0.887	
ENJ2: To enjoy using social media to review my food experiences	5.16	1.632	0.772	
ENJ3: To enjoy replying to others who comment on my posts on websites/social networks	5.07	1.726	0.727	
ENJ4: To show others how much I have enjoyed my food experiences	5.48	1.422	0.839	

Self-achievement				0.699
SEL1: To gain a sense of personal achievement	5.07	1.708	0.629	
SEL2: To remember my food experience while travelling	6.17	1.246	0.904	
SEL3: To improve my self-fulfilment	5.11	1.618	0.536	

Note: KMO = .917; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, p-value <0.005

Testing measurement model

CFA was carried out to verify the hypothesised model for validity and reliability. The goodness-of-fit of the model was proved with the previously mentioned criteria recommended by Hooper et al. (2008) and Hu and Bentler (1999). The fit indices include the: ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom (χ^2/df), which should not exceed 3; the standardised root mean residual (SRMR), which should be less than 0.08; the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which should be less than 0.06; the comparative fit index (CFI), which should be greater than 0.9; and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), which should be greater than 0.9. According to model fit, items that do not meet the criteria will be eliminated. The final result of the measurement model then showed a good fit ($\chi^2 = 108.743$, $df = 47$, $\chi^2/df = 2.31$, $p < 0.001$, $RMSEA = 0.053$, $SRMR = 0.032$, $CFI = 0.968$, and $TLI = 0.955$). The final CFA result showed that all the indices achieved the minimum thresholds of Hooper et al. (2008) and the strategy by Hu and Bentler (1999), except for the level of significance of chi-square. The chi-square test has limitations because it is commonly sensitive to large sample sizes and complex models with a number of indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, the overall confirmatory factor model's fit was adequate.

Table 5 Confirmatory factor analysis results with reliability and validity.

Construct/items	β	S.E.	t value	CR (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)
Social recognition				0.791	0.65
SOC1: To be seen as an expert by sharing my food experience	0.844	0.023	36.98		
SOC 2: To be socially recognised experience posted on social media	0.799	0.027	29.824		
SOC 3: To receive 'Likes'	0.775	0.029	27.199		
Altruism				0.829	0.618
ALT1: To help others find food recommendations	0.749	0.031	23.92		
ALT2: To promote restaurants or food attractions	0.793	0.03	26.283		
ALT3: To help others make better decisions	0.815	0.026	31.472		

Perceived enjoyment				0.866	0.617
ENJ1: To have fun sharing my food experiences on social media	0.764	0.033	23.170		
ENJ2: To enjoy using social media to review my food experiences	0.812	0.024	34.029		
ENJ3: To enjoy replying to others who comment on my posts on websites/social networks	0.828	0.021	38.193		
ENJ4: To show others how much I have enjoyed my food experiences	0.735	0.033	21.987		
Self-achievement				0.755	0.607
SEL1: To gain a sense of personal achievement	0.785	0.032	24.68		
SEL3: To improve my self-fulfilment	0.773	0.036	21.483		

Note: β = standardized loading; S.E. = standard error; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

The outcome shows that standardised factor loading for all the items exceeded the suggested value of 0.5 and is statistically significant with a few standard errors (S.E.= 0.021-0.036), as shown in Table 5. The average variance extracted (AVE) values were also greater than 0.5, supporting the convergence validity of each construct. The composite reliability (CR) was evaluated individually for each construct to confirm the internal consistency reliability in the model (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The values showed all values were higher than the recommended level of 0.7, which reflects the reliability of the results (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the employed factors was performed to investigate how effectively a construct is different from other constructs. The discriminant validity can be explained by comparing the square root of AVE and correlation estimates between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hulland, 1999). As seen in Table 6, the discriminant validity test revealed that all square roots of AVE values along the diagonal were larger than correlations between any two constructs, indicating that each construct was obviously distinct. These results confirm the accuracy and trustworthiness of data for the four new factors. The findings of the CFA analysis verify the relationship between the variables in the measurement model of tourist motivation to share food experiences on social media during the trip.

Table 6 Discriminant validity and correlations of the construct.

Construct	Social recognition	Perceived enjoyment	Self-achievement	Altruism
Social recognition	0.807			
Perceived enjoyment	0.655***	0.786		
Self-achievement	0.65***	0.628***	0.779	
Altruism	0.559***	0.748***	0.604***	0.786

Note: ***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level; the square root AVE is on the diagonal

Next, a second-order CFA model was selected to test the hypotheses on the motivations for sharing food experiences among tourists. The overall fit index of the model indicated a satisfactory level of fit ($\chi^2 = 125.461$, $df = 49$, $\chi^2/df = 2.56$, $p < 0.001$, $RMSEA = 0.059$, $SRMR = 0.04$, $CFI = 0.959$, and $TLI = 0.944$).

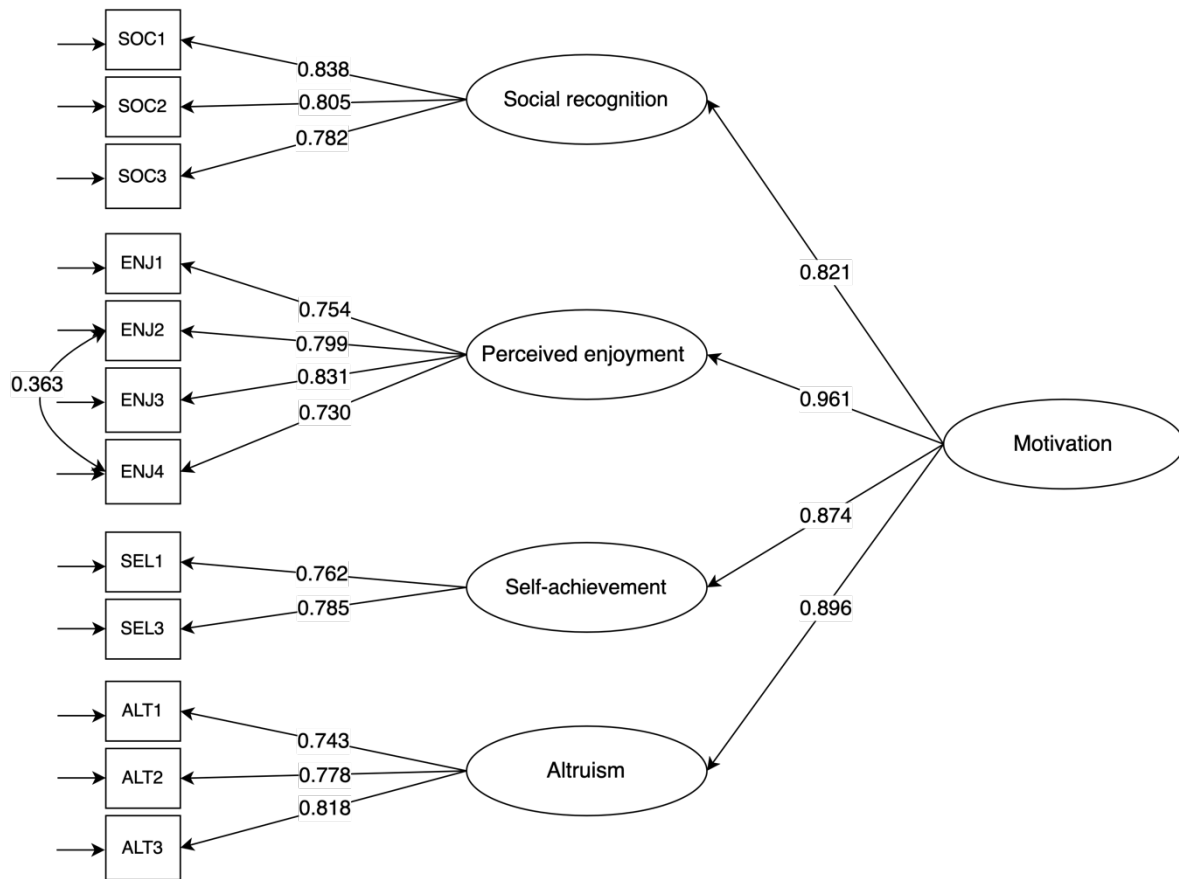


Figure 2 Confirmatory factor analysis model of the motivation to share food experiences on social media.

Figure 2 shows the results of the second-order model. All the factor loading coefficients for four latent factors were statistically significant at a 99% confidence level (p -value < 0.001), with the following statistical findings: (1) Social recognition includes SOC1, “To be seen as an expert by sharing my food experience”, as the most important indicator ($\beta = 0.838$), followed by SOC2, “To be socially recognised experience posted on social media” ($\beta = 0.805$), and SOC3, “To receive ‘likes’” ($\beta = 0.782$); (2) Perceived enjoyment is mostly derived from ENJ3, “To enjoy replying to others who comment on my posts on social networks” ($\beta = 0.831$), and ENJ2, “To enjoy using social media to review my food experiences” ($\beta = 0.799$). ENJ1, “To have

fun sharing my food experiences on social media" ($\beta = 0.754$), and ENJ4, "To show others how much I have enjoyed my food experiences" ($\beta = 0.730$), are also significant, but to a lesser degree; (3) Self-achievement achievement is measured by two indicators which includes SEL3, "To improve my self-fulfilment" ($\beta = 0.785$), and SEL1, "To gain a sense of personal achievement" ($\beta = 0.762$); (4) Altruism is mainly determined by ALT3, "To help others make better decisions" ($\beta = 0.818$), followed by ALT2, "To promote restaurants or food attractions" ($\beta = 0.778$), and well as ALT1, "To help others find food recommendations" ($\beta = 0.743$).

Regarding the second-order model (Figure 2), four key dimensions determine tourist motivation for sharing food experiences on social media while travelling at a statistical significance of 0.001, supporting the hypotheses H1-H4. This means that social recognition (H1), perceived enjoyment (H2), altruism (H3) and self-achievement (H4) are underlying factors of the motivation to share food experiences on social media. In sum, the second-order CFA supports the hypothesised indicated that perceived enjoyment was found to be the highest standardised loading coefficient among those latent factors ($\beta = 0.961$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$), followed by altruism ($\beta = 0.896$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$), self-achievement ($\beta = 0.874$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$), and social recognition ($\beta = 0.821$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$), respectively (Figure 2).

Discussion

Although food experiences shared on social media sites have been explained in prior research (Peng, 2019; Wang et al., 2016), a model to measure the motives behind this sharing behaviour. Furthermore, although the motivations for publishing travel food experiences on social media were proposed by Wang et al. (2016), the validity of measurement scale was not explored. To find out what elements matter and how much weight each one has in determining overall motives, EFA and CFA were used in the study. The items of motivation from this study were adapted and developed from the relevant literature on sharing behaviour (Feng & Harrington, 2020; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2020; Yang & Lai, 2011; Zucco et al., 2020).

The study's empirical findings provide tenable evidence of the factors that motivate tourists to share food experiences when they travel in online communities. The

hypothesised model was proven to have acceptable reliability and validity. As a result, those motivations can be explained by four main dimensions or factors, comprising social recognition, perceived enjoyment, self-achievement, and altruism. The study was in line with earlier research that showed tourists' interest in creating and sharing food experiences on social media was not driven by a single dimension but rather a multidimensional motivation construct (Lee et al., 2015). The findings affirm the research that the motivation concerning social recognition (Cheung & Lee, 2012), perceived enjoyment (Daxböck et al., 2021), self-achievement (Yang & Lai, 2011), and altruism (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014) are the significant drivers toward tourist behaviour in sharing food experiences on social media.

The concepts of social recognition in this study related to tourists' wishes to share, create, and discuss their food experiences in online communities in order to be viewed as the experts, reputation and gain more 'Likes', a finding supported by previous studies (Daxböck et al., 2021; Zucco et al., 2020; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). This construct was considered as a part of the egoistic motivation in the research by Cheung and Lee (2012) and Yang (2017). Scholars have previously indicated that people are willing to spend their time posting or sharing their travel experiences on social networks because, in part, they partially desire to be acknowledged by the community (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). In this study, social recognition is confirmed as a vital motivation for tourist sharing their food experience on social media.

Notably, while this study exposes the different motivations for sharing food experiences on social media, the perceived enjoyment factor had the highest factor loading coefficient (Figure 2). This result coincides with the past research conducted by Oliveira et al. (2020) and Kang and Schuett (2013), who found that perceived enjoyment is the most critical variable in determining why visitors share their tourism experiences on social media. It is also consistent with previous studies that highlighted enjoyment as the significant variable behind experience sharing during travelling (Amaro et al., 2016; Daxböck et al., 2021; Kang & Schuett, 2013). The perceived enjoyment factor refer to a group of tourists who are motivated to share food-related experiences in virtual social networks for the enjoyment and pleasure they get. That enjoyment can be attained through posting, commenting, or showing off their experiences in gastronomic tourism to others on social media. The enjoyment of

sharing travel experiences has a positive effect on a trip (Li et al., 2021). In other words, these elements appear to be associated with emotional articulation, as found in (Wang et al., 2016), which posting food experiences on social media. This research emphasises that the enjoyment motive is a strong determinant of tourist sharing their food experiences on social media when they travel.

In terms of self-achievement, both items relating to a sense of personal achievement and self-fulfilment were grouped in one factor. It explains that travellers who write and share online content about what they eat or other food experiences at the destination are partially compelled by the basic human need for a sense of personal accomplishment (Yang & Lai, 2011) and for greater self-fulfilment (Oliveira et al., 2020). The studies on sharing behaviour on social media undertaken by Yang and Lai (2011) examined self-achievement as internal self-concept-based motivation. Sharing online content concerning their food experience might help them feel that they have accomplished in their goals. In addition, travellers generally expect satisfying fulfilment, which is an inner ambition from their engagement on social media platforms (Oliveira et al., 2020).

Altruism has been extensively identified as a fundamental motivational factor of information sharing in virtual social networks (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lee et al., 2015; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). It could be speculated that the tourists' motivation for sharing food-related content is driven by altruism (e.g., to help others find food recommendations, to support restaurants or food attractions, and to help others make better decisions). Munar and Jacobsen (2014) revealed that tourists pay attention to helping others without expecting anything in return, such as assisting others or stopping others from purchasing products or services. It implies that public interest motivation can be linked to compassionate emotions by advising and sharing experiences with others. In gastronomic tourism content, the authors corroborate previous studies that identified altruistic impulses as the primary motivator for tourists sharing and reviewing their dining experiences with others on social media (Yang, 2017). In addition, customers who have been treated well by a service provider may decide to support it in return by giving it a good review. Therefore, altruism can be an important predictor for tourist motivation to share dining experiences via social media while travelling.

Conclusions

This study investigated what motivates tourists to share their food experiences on social media. The sample comprised 443 respondents who used social media to share their food experiences while and after visiting Ayutthaya, Thailand. EFA was used to extract four constructs with strong internal consistency. CFA enhanced the model and demonstrated its satisfactory measurement validity and reliability. Twelve final indicators were effectively categorised into four meaningful dimensions of tourist motivation to share food experiences on social media. The findings support the hypotheses that all four factors were underlying indicators of that motivation. The four motivational dimensions or factors are social recognition, perceived enjoyment, self-achievement, and altruism. According to factor loading coefficients in the model, the most dominant dimension shaping tourists' motivations to share food experiences on social media is perceived enjoyment, followed by altruism, self-achievement and social recognition.

The social recognition dimension is associated with tourists who share their food experiences to be appreciated and widely acknowledged. They desire to be an expert, have a reputation, and receive more 'Likes' by sharing those experiences. The perceived enjoyment dimension is associated with those who enjoy sharing or reviewing their food experiences on social media and replying to others who comment on their posts. The self-achievement dimension relates to for a sense of personal achievement and greater self-fulfilment. The altruistic dimension is identified with travellers who want to help others find food recommendations, promote restaurants or food attractions, and help others make better decisions by sharing their experience on food tourism through social media.

This research bears both theoretical and practical implications. From the theoretical distributions, our findings constitute many significant breakthroughs forward in research on the influence motivations of food experience-sharing behaviour. Although the important reasons behind sharing food experiences on social media have been studied, the absence of a specific measurement tool for sharing motivation about food tourism represents a critical information gap. To fill the knowledge gap, our study is the first attempt to build the measurement tool of each factor motivated to share food-

related experiences in virtual social networks using the factor analysis approaches. Second, by offering a new conceptual measurement model, the author intends to contribute to the literature on motivations behind food-related content sharing in the online environment during travel. The derived measurement model differed from prior research in that it generated twelve crucial items with four core dimensions that motivate tourists to post or share food experiences online. The study provides a new multidimensional motivation model by combining and developing the different variables from the previous work field. Four main dimensions of the motivation explored in the study are recommended for consideration in future research to give a better understanding of the sharing behaviour of food experiences on social media. By using a second-order factor analysis throughout this study compared with the traditional first CFA in the previous studies (Javed et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2019), the study suggests that the measurement model is more robust and reliable. In addition, the approach not only explores the motivational construct but also contributes to the academic literature by comparing the levels of the different motivations. Finally, this study provides empirical results that support the existing literature. The empirical investigation shows the importance of different factors in contributing to different motivation levels to share food experiences on social media. Furthermore, the study enhances the research on sharing behaviour, pointing out that perceived enjoyment is the most significant predictor for measuring motivations behind food-related content sharing.

In terms of managerial implications, the study provides valuable information for marketing practitioners of tourism and the food industries. The results of this study have shed light on the reasons why travelers motivate to share experiences related to food activities in online communities. Therefore, marketers should construct promotional strategies to persuade tourists to be willing to review, post, and comment positively about their experiences at the destination based on the result of the significant motive factor in this study. The primary elements that were found in this research can serve as beneficial recommendations for improving and maintaining their food destination by designing different attractions for visitors based on their motives. Moreover, the research will aid tourism-relevant organisations in comprehending the tourist-sharing behaviour of food experiences when they travel, as well as enhancing their food tourism marketing and management strategies.

The limitations of the study, as with any other research involving the development of a model, it is feasible that additional factors other than those discovered in this study may also determine the motivation for why tourists share food experiences on social media. Besides, this finding of tourist motives behind sharing food experiences on social media focused on specific destinations. According to the geographical scope of the study, the survey was restricted to a single region, which could hamper the generalisation of the study's findings. Further research might be repeated on the study model of motivation in different destinations.

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ARTICLE 3

Sharing Food Experiences on Social Media: A Cross-Generational Comparison between Millennials and Gen Z

Sharing food experiences on social media: A cross-generational comparison between Millennials and Gen Z

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims firstly to investigate the factors influencing the intention to share food experiences while travelling on social media, secondly, to examine the impact of sharing intention on tourist behaviour and loyalty, and thirdly, to determine whether there is a difference in these relationships between Millennials and Gen Z.

Design/methodology/approach – The sample was collected by surveying 392 respondents between 18 and 42 years in Ayutthaya, Thailand. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and multigroup analysis were performed to examine the causal effect relationship among both generations.

Findings – The findings highlight different effects between motivation, satisfaction, sharing intention, sharing behaviour, and loyalty across generations.

Research limitations/implications

This study contributes to the literature on the antecedents of food-sharing behaviour in online communities by indicating factors influencing culinary experience sharing and loyalty across generations. Future research suggests considering the behaviour of sharing food online through cross-cultural comparisons in various regions.

Practical implications

Millennials and Gen Z are expanding their market share in the coming years. The findings revealed in this study can assist in enhancing marketing strategies for food tourism and generating more intense food experiences for both generations.

Social implications

Understanding the factors that lead to sharing food experiences on social media is crucial for developing gastronomy tourism in the digital age.

Originality/value – The study's outcome provides new insights for conceptual development regarding sharing food tourism on social media by drawing comparisons across multiple generations.

Keywords *Motivation, Dining satisfaction, Sharing intention, Sharing behaviour, Loyalty, Multigroup analysis*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

In the current digital transformation world, social media have brought about to transform travellers' behaviour. With ubiquitous Internet access and the rise of online social networking sites, posting food photographs has emerged as a pervasive trend, especially among younger generations, such as Gen Z and millennials (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2021; Peng *et al.*, 2019). Both generations popularly capture photos while dining and share their experiences with others on social media. Social media has tremendously influenced tourists' dining habits. It has not changed just what they decide to eat but also how they consume and the reasons behind their consumption (Javed *et al.*, 2021). User-generated content (UGC) in social networking has become increasingly powerful information for tourists' decision-making (Leung *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2018). When deciding where to dine, people often rely on reviews posted online by previous customers. This feedback encourages individuals to travel and consume food at tourist destinations (Javed *et al.*, 2021). Sharing food-related information and experiences with others through social networking is deemed crucial in the business sector, as it enhances the efficiency of tourist attraction management and contributes to the creation of a positive image for tourist sites. In other words, direct visitor feedback plays an integral part in promoting travel sources and selecting tourist sites (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

For the development of gastronomy tourism, it is essential to comprehend why people decide to share and post their dining experiences with others through social media and how it affects their future behaviour. Understanding the factors that lead to the intention to share food experiences on social media is crucial. Motivations are significant determinants of sharing behaviour (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). The process of online content creation was driven by different motivating factors (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, some authors mentioned dining experience factors such as satisfaction, as a precursor of intentions to spread electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Javed *et al.*, 2021; Yang, 2017). Even though past research has shed light on the phenomenon of sharing food-related experiences online (Javed *et al.*, 2021; Peng, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2017), a gap remains in the literature, with a limited understanding of the socio-psychological factors influencing sharing behaviour on online social networking sites. Prior studies have mainly focused on behaviours and factors leading to the intention to share food

experiences on social media. However, it is still in its infancy and it remains unclear what significant influence on sharing food experiences on social media. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation models are lacking in validation. Furthermore, the impact of sharing intention on the post behaviour, for example, loyalty and sharing intention, has still not been examined.

To fill the foregoing research gaps, this study aims to explore empirical insights into the behavioural concept of sharing food experiences on social media. The authors do not examine only the factors that affect the intention to share food experiences on social media but also investigate its effects on post-tourist behaviours among multi-generational travellers. The study focuses on young generations; Millennials (aged between 27 and 42) and Gen Z (aged between 18 and 26), since both generations are deemed tech-savvy and constitute the major target segment as being more active on social media platforms (Chellasamy *et al.*, 2022).

Therefore, the objectives of the research are: (1) to explore the factors influencing the intention to share food experiences on social media, (2) to examine the effect of sharing food experiences via social media on actual tourist behaviour and loyalty to the destination and (3) to investigate whether differences between Millennials and Gen Z influence food experience sharing behaviour through social media.

Consequently, the study revealed a conceptual framework for sharing food tourism experiences on online social networks. By comprehending generational differences in tourist behaviour of sharing food experiences, the findings of this study can guide to improve marketing strategies in engaging food tourism and generating tourist experience with greater intensity for both generations.

Literature review

Previous research offers the theoretical framework related to the topic of sharing experiences in virtual communities in many aspects. In this section, the conceptual underpinnings of our research model will be discussed. We will begin by discussing the relevant concepts of the motivation behind sharing food experience behaviours as well as reviewing the important role of dining satisfaction with food experience to behavioural intention. Following that, the influence of sharing intention towards

travellers' behaviour during and post-trip was presented, and then we will introduce the moderating effect of Millennials and Gen Z.

Motivation behind sharing food experience behaviours

Prior research has demonstrated that motivation is the linchpin in persuading individuals to share information about products and services (Kakhk *et al.*, 2019; Yang and Lai, 2011). Regarding motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media, Munar and Jacobsen (2014) identified that altruism is the primary trigger for people to produce online content and share it with others (Leung *et al.*, 2013; Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). Altruistic motivation refers to the desire to serve others without expecting anything in return (Cheung and Lee, 2012), whereas some travellers typically participate in social media to fulfil their inner desires (Lin and Huang, 2013). People are likely to post their travel-related experiences on online media in order to record them as memories for themselves (Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti, 2021). Spreading their words about their travel experiences on social networking helps achieve personal fulfilment by creating a desired impression of oneself. Oliveira *et al.* (2020). Kang and Schuett (2013) distributed that perceived enjoyment was the key motive of willingness to share travel experiences on social media. Perceived enjoyment relates to the extent to which an Internet user engages in social networks because of the enjoyment and pleasure of posting and sharing information (Daxböck *et al.*, 2021).

The existing literature provides a cognitive appraisal explanation of why tourists share food experiences on social media. Yang (2017) proposed that people are willing to support the restaurant if their dining experience is pleasant through eWOM. Also, they feel good about helping others on social media. Whereas Javed *et al.* (2021) highlighted that posting food photographs helps people not only make memories during the trip but also share food images online to express themselves and let others know what they eat and where they hang out.

Although the motivating elements have been explained by the former studies, the relationships between the motivation and intention to share food experiences via social media have not been statistically investigated. Taking into account these theoretical concepts, the first hypothesis proposed is:

H1: Tourist motivation positively influences the intention to share food experiences on social media.

Traveler satisfaction with the food experience

Satisfaction is one of the characteristics subjected to the most extensive research in the marketing and tourism literature. Satisfaction refers to the traveller's post-purchase evaluation of the destination (Chi *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, satisfaction which is derived from comparing and fulfilling expectations during their trips (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019), can be regarded as an experience factor (Yang, 2017). Chi *et al.* (2013) suggested three primary factors that contribute to the satisfaction level of visitors towards food consumption, including restaurant atmosphere and service, convenience and local cultural experience, and food quality and variety. The results indicated that gastronomic tourism has great potential to enhance overall tourist satisfaction with destinations. Consequently, tourist satisfaction can be a crucial predictor of tourists' future behaviour. Furthermore, the level of tourist satisfaction can measure a destination's success (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019).

Existing literature has evidenced the relationship between customer satisfaction and sharing information regarding the brand (Uslu, 2020; Yang, 2017). Tsao and Hsieh (2012) have highlighted the significant role of customer satisfaction on positive eWOM sharing. They mentioned that if customers feel satisfied with the products that the seller provides, they are more likely to maintain a long-term relationship with the seller. Accordingly, customer satisfaction would lead the users to provide positive information, share opinions, and recommend the product and seller on the online platform. The impact of satisfaction on behavioural intention on social media has been supported, indicating that satisfaction with the service quality and atmosphere of restaurants affects eWOM engagement (Molinari *et al.*, 2008; Uslu, 2020). Thus, we propose that satisfaction with the elements of meal experiences, such as the variety of foods, atmosphere, service of the staff, and food cultural experience, might determine the willingness to spread online comments related to food tourism.

Even though previous research demonstrated a link between satisfaction and intentional behaviour, some studies have cast doubt on the actual outcome, which showed that satisfaction factors might not be a significant predictor of the sharing

intention in certain cases. Yang (2017) refuted prior findings that satisfaction does not encourage eWOM intention. The relationship between restaurant satisfaction and the intention to spread online comments was not found in his investigation. Therefore, to achieve empirical clarity about the above relationship between satisfaction and the intention to share food experiences, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Satisfaction positively influences tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media.

The impact of tourists' intention to share experiences

The study on the effect of consumers' knowledge-sharing intention by Dewi *et al.* (2018) stated that a consequence of information-sharing activity generated by customers would enhance the familiarity and awareness the product involvement and knowledge. Sharing product-related information can be defined as the level of concern and attention that a product receives from consumers, significantly influencing purchase intention and consumer behaviour. Another point of view, Kakhk *et al.* (2019) demonstrates that having the intention to share one's knowledge serves as a driver for the sharing behaviour. Lin and Huang (2018) also mentioned that behavioural intention directly influences actual behaviour. Thus, an individual's purpose for behaving in a certain way is directly affected by the intention of the activity itself.

In line with tourism research, the impact of sharing tourist experiences on social media has been noted in some studies. They remarked that sharing travel experiences on social media had a bearing on their behaviour (Wang *et al.*, 2016) and their loyalty to the destination (Jain *et al.*, 2021; Wong *et al.*, 2020). Wang *et al.* (2016) revealed the role of sharing intention on travel experience-sharing behaviour. This study reveals that sharing the intention of tourist experiences is directly related to their behaviour. In other words, the greater the intention to share, the stronger the sharing behaviour. While Wong *et al.* (2020) found that the impact of sharing intention was empirically linked to loyalty to the brand and future behaviour. Li *et al.* (2022) found that people are more likely to share information with their peers and will have stronger loyalty when they receive some feedback, such as comments and likes. The behaviour of sharing memorable tourism experiences on mobile social media influences tourists' intention to visit other destinations. The relationship between sharing travel-related experiences

on social media and the intention to revisit the destinations was examined by Kumar *et al.* (2021). This study also indicated that the intention to share travel experiences in virtual communities influences revisits intention. Based on this viewpoint, the impact of sharing food experiences during the trip will be investigated through two hypotheses as follows:

H3: Tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences sharing behaviour.

H4: Tourist intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences travellers' loyalty to the destination.

Millennials & Generation Z

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, typically refer to people born between 1981 and 1996. Millennials are often referred to as "digital natives" as the first age cohort that grew up in a world where technology was already pervasive (Prasad *et al.*, 2019). This generation contains distinct age groups, including both adolescents and young adults (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2021). They easily adapt to the Internet, social networks, and a wide variety of digital platforms. Social media plays an important role in the decision-making of millennial travellers. For example, Millennials mainly use social media for research and comparisons about products and services before making purchase decisions (Hartijasti and Cho, 2018). It is noted that Millennials are more likely to create and share content on social media, such as photos, videos, or blogs (Pew research center, 2021).

On the other hand, Generation Z refers to those born between 1997 and 2010, when smartphones and social media were already widespread in society. Gen Z is considered to be the most digitally proficient generation (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2021). They use social media as a primary means of communication and self-expression (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). For example, Gen Z prefers to use social media platforms that allow for short-form and visual content, such as Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram, to express their thoughts, emotions, experiences, and interests with others (Pew research center, 2021). Moreover, Generation Z is more likely to spend more

time online (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021) and more social than previous generations (Slivar *et al.*, 2019).

According to some key differences in how they use social media, we can assume that in the light of the behaviour to share food experiences on social media can be changed depending on differences among generations. We proposed that different generational travellers may moderate the relationships among sharing motivation, satisfaction with food experience, intention to share food experience, sharing behaviour, and loyalty. Thus, the following hypotheses arise:

H5a: Tourist motivation positively influences the intention to share food experiences on social media for both Millennials and Generation Z.

H5b: Satisfaction positively influences tourist intention to share food experiences on social media for both Millennials and Generation Z.

H5c: Tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences sharing behaviour for both Millennials and Generation Z.

H5d: Tourist intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences travellers' loyalty to the destination for both Millennials and Generation Z.

To sum up, the proposed model for this study is depicted in Figure 1

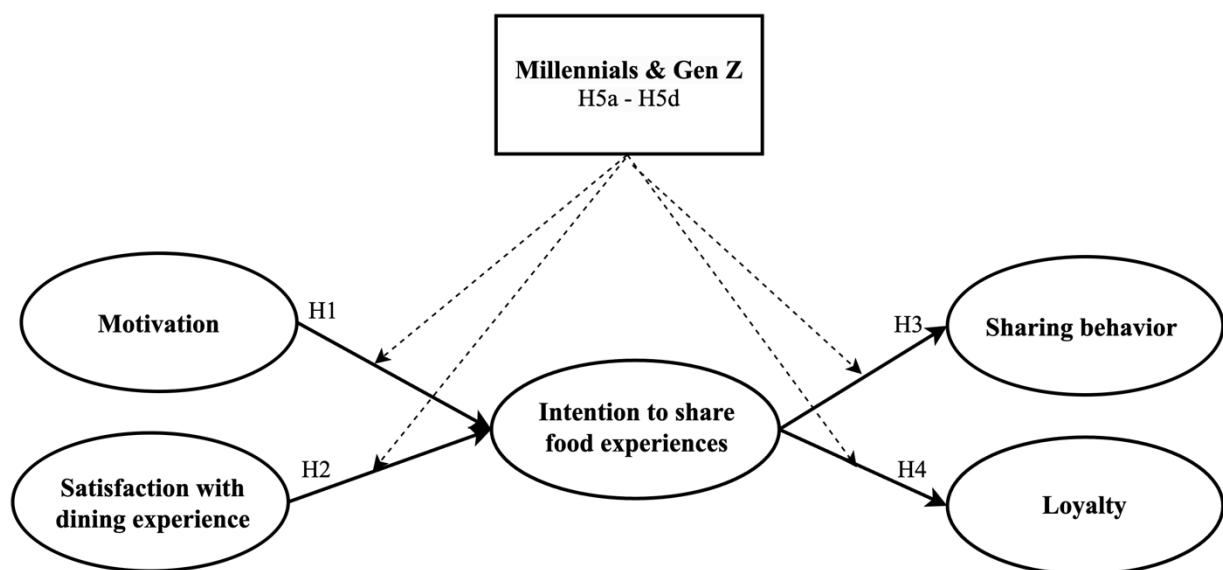


Figure 1 Proposed research model.

Research methodology

Measures

The following constructs were investigated for this study: motivation, satisfaction with the dining experience, intention to share food experience, sharing behaviour, and loyalty. The scale items applied in this study were designed and developed after a comprehensive previous literature review. Table 1 presents all constructs and indicators for measuring causal relationships of the research model. All items for five constructs of the research model used a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To ensure content validity, the survey instrument was initially edited and evaluated based on the suggestions of six academic staff in tourism. Before the survey began, the pilot study was performed with 50 participants at the university. The results and feedback from the pilot test led to the revision of the questionnaire. Confusing and ambiguous elements were modified during this phase.

Table 1 Constructs and items.

Construct	Measurement item	Reference
Motivation	MOT 1: To get replies from friends/others about my food tourism experience posted on social media	Javed et al. (2021); Munar and Jacobsen (2014); Kang and Schuett (2013); Oliveira <i>et al.</i> (2020)
	MOT 2: To show others how enjoyable the meal experience	
	MOT 3: To be socially recognized experience	
	MOT 4: To have fun sharing my food experiences on social media	
	MOT 5: To improve my self-fulfilment	
	MOT 6: To help others make better decisions	
Satisfaction with dining experiences	SAT 1: Food variety and taste	Tan (2017); Yang (2017)
	SAT 2: Restaurant atmosphere and surrounding environment	
	SAT 3: Service	
	SAT 4: Local culture involved in gastronomy	
	SAT 5: Overall food experiences	
Intention to share food experiences	INT 1: Intention to share my food experience with others on social media.	Kumar et al. (2021)
	INT 2: Intention to share photos of my food experiences on social media.	
	INT 3: Intention to reply to others who ask or respond to my post shared via social media.	
Sharing behaviour	SB 1: When I travel, I share photos of food experiences on social media.	Munar and Jacobsen (2014); Wong et al. (2020)
	SB 2: When I travel, I post videos of food experiences on social media.	

	SB 3: When I travel, I write reviews or comments about my food experiences on social platforms.	
Loyalty	LOY 1: Intention to revisit the destination. LOY 2: Intention to return to eat food at the destination. LOY 3: Intention to recommend others to come to the destination.	Kumar et al. (2021)

Data collection and sampling

Ayutthaya was selected for data collection due to its city as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major tourist attraction. Ayutthaya is the former capital of Thailand before Bangkok. There are several attractive restaurants, local markets, cafes, and street food, together with its unique traditional cuisine and cultural heritage, which lead the city to become the foodie destination for both local and foreign tourists. Moreover, Ayutthaya has just recently become one of the fifth Thai provinces to be inscribed in the gourmet's bibl by Michelin Guide 2022, empowering the city with remarkable gastronomy tourism. Therefore, this option allows for the acquisition of valuable insights into food-related experiences.

The questionnaire survey using the convenience sampling method was performed at the entrances of Wat Mahathat temple in Ayutthaya historical park, which is a famous tourist attraction, surrounding cuisine landmarks such as Chao Phrom market, Ayutthaya night markets, street food, restaurants, etc. The sampling unit was the tourists who utilized social media platforms to share their food-related experiences during the trip to Ayutthaya.

Data analysis

The structural equation modelling (SEM) approach was performed using Mplus software, following the three stages. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model. The reliability of the measurement scale and the construct validity (convergent and discriminant validity) were evaluated in this stage. Second, structural equation modelling (SEM) was carried out to measure the entire structure. Finally, the multigroup analysis was conducted to examine the moderating generational effects on the structural relationship (Millennials and Gen Z travellers), including a measurement invariance analysis.

Results

Respondent demographics

A sample of 392 valid responses was collected, including 48.5% Millennials, aged between 26 and 42 and 51.5% Gen Z travellers, aged between 18 and 26. The total sample presented 63.8% women and 36.2% men. Participants were well educated, with 67.1% accomplishing an undergraduate degree and 24% holding a post-graduate degree. In terms of occupation, the major sample was company employees (39%), followed by students (26.8%), public servants (13.5%), business owners and self-employed (13%), unemployed (5.9%), and homemakers (1.8%). According to Millennials data, the sample was primarily comprised of women (63.4%). More than half of the respondents were undergraduates (57.4%) and master's or above (35.6%). Besides, most millennial respondents were employees (52.5%). As for Gen Z respondents, the sample was mainly females (63.4%), which is a similar trend to the Millennials sample. There is a notable difference between the two samples of Millennials and Gen Z in terms of education level and occupation, due to the different age groups. Gen Z respondents were mostly students (53.2%) having an undergraduate degree (77.4%) (see Table 2).

Table 2 The demographic characteristics.

Variable	Frequency (%)		
	Total (n=392)	Millennials (n=202)	Gen Z (n=190)
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	250 (63.8%)	128 (63.4%)	122 (64.2%)
Male	143 (36.2%)	74 (36.6%)	68 (35.8%)
<i>Education level</i>			
Secondary school or less	35 (9%)	14 (6.9%)	21 (11.1%)
Undergraduate	263 (67.1%)	116 (57.4%)	147 (77.4%)
Master's and above	94 (24%)	72 (35.6%)	22 (11.6%)
<i>Occupation</i>			
Student	105 (26.8%)	4 (2%)	101 (53.2%)
Employee	153 (39%)	106 (52.5%)	47 (24.7%)
Business owner/self-employed	51 (13%)	34 (16.8%)	17 (8.9%)
Homemaker	7 (1.8%)	6 (3%)	1 (0.5%)
Unemployed	23 (5.9%)	12 (5.9%)	11 (5.8%)
Public servant	53 (13.5%)	40 (19.8%)	13 (6.8%)

Measurement validation

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with robust maximum likelihood estimation was performed to assess the model fit through five fit indices: χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR. As presented in Table 3, the goodness-of-fit index measures for the total sample are acceptable following the suggested threshold of Hair *et al.* (2010). Thus, the model fit for the pooled sample is confirmed.

Table 3 The overall goodness-of-fit for the measurement model.

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df ≤ 3	TLI ≥ 0.9	CFI ≥ 0.9	RMSEA ≤ 0.06	SRMR ≤ 0.08
Pooled sample	284.417	160	1.778	0.954	0.962	0.045	0.046

The validity of the measurement model was then examined (see Table 4). The results showed Cronbach's alphas for all latent constructs were larger than the recommended cut-off value of 0.70, indicating a good internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Besides, all items had standardized factor loadings above the recommended value of 0.5. The convergent validity of the constructs was examined using average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values are all above 0.5, achieving the requirement for convergent validity. In terms of composite reliability (CR), the result verified that all factors are higher than the thresholds ($CR > 0.7$). Finally, the discriminant validity was performed to investigate how effectively a construct differs from other constructs by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with the correlations between pairs of the construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 5, the square roots of AVE values are greater than all correlation coefficients, confirming discriminant validity in this study.

Table 4 Construct validity and reliability assessment (n=392).

Construct/items	Standardized factor loadings	α	AVE	CR
Motivation		0.87	0.54	0.87
MOT 1	0.769			
MOT 2	0.696			
MOT 3	0.641			
MOT 4	0.806			
MOT 5	0.716			
MOT 6	0.762			

Satisfaction with dining experiences		0.92	0.69	0.92
SAT 1	0.833			
SAT 2	0.86			
SAT 3	0.847			
SAT 4	0.784			
SAT 5	0.828			
Intention to share food experiences		0.84	0.65	0.84
INT 1	0.874			
INT 2	0.799			
INT 3	0.730			
Sharing behaviour		0.79	0.57	0.80
SB 1	0.768			
SB 2	0.786			
SB 3	0.713			
Loyalty		0.91	0.78	0.92
LOY 1	0.899			
LOY 2	0.938			
LOY 3	0.812			

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE= average variance extracted

Table 5 Discriminant validity.

	MOT	SAT	INT	SB	LOY
Motivation (MOT)	0.734				
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.406	0.831			
Intention to share food experiences (INT)	0.717	0.461	0.803		
Sharing behaviour (SB)	0.538	0.535	0.596	0.756	
Loyalty (LOY)	0.571	0.638	0.558	0.400	0.885

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; the square root AVE is on the diagonal.

Structural model

SEM approach was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The overall goodness-of-fit indices showed $\chi^2_{(df=163)} = 293.755$, $p < 0.001$, TLI = 0.953, CFI = 0.960, RMSEA = 0.045, SRMR = 0.049, indicating a good model fit for the estimated structural model. Figure 2. depicts the standardized path coefficients between constructs. The findings found that motivation ($\beta = 0.790$, $p < 0.001$) and satisfaction with dining experiences ($\beta = 0.148$, $p < 0.05$) have significant positive effects on travellers' intention to share food experiences on social media. Thus, the results supported H1 and H2. In addition,

the findings suggest that the intention to share food experiences on social media positively influenced travellers' sharing behaviour ($\beta = 0.723$, $p < 0.001$), and loyalty ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3 and H4 (see Table 6).

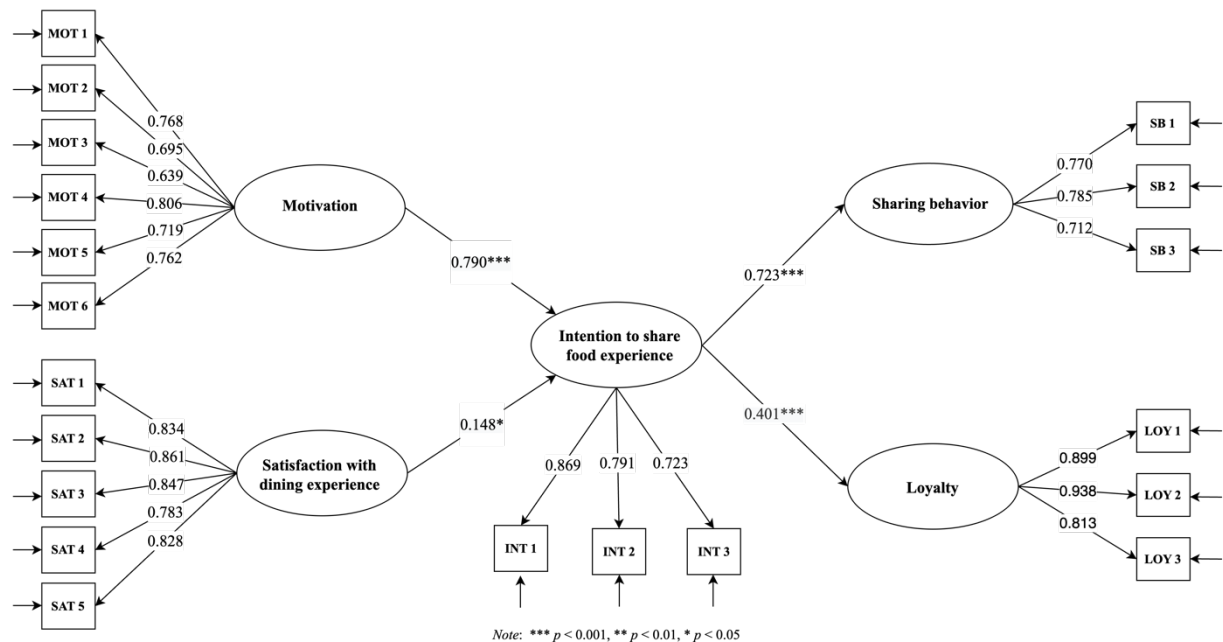


Figure 2 Structural model.

Table 6 Hypothesized results.

Hypotheses	Paths	Standardized Estimates	Results
H1	MOT → INT	0.790 ***	Supported
H2	SAT → INT	0.148 *	Supported
H3	INT → SB	0.723 ***	Supported
H4	INT → LOY	0.401 ***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Multigroup analysis

Before conducting the multigroup analysis between Millennials and Generation Z), the measurement invariance was evaluated to ensure that the construct measures were comparable across the different groups by testing for configural invariance (same factorial structure with no constraints between the groups), metric invariance (same factor loadings), and scalar invariance (same intercepts). To assess each degree of invariance, the difference between the fit of the increasingly constrained CFA model

and the following less constrained model is compared using the CFI and RMSEA difference tests recommended by Cheung and Rensvold (2002) ($\Delta\text{CFI} \leq 0.010$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.015$). As shown in Table 7, the ΔCFI and ΔRMSEA results were lower than the under the thresholds, providing strong evidence for measurement (scalar) and structure (metric) invariance across groups.

Table 7 Measurement invariance testing.

Model	$\chi^2(\text{df})$	RMSEA	CFI	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$
Configural invariance	496.82(320)	0.053	0.949			
Metric invariance	510.02(335)	0.052	0.950	0.001	-0.001	13.901, $p = 0.53$
Scalar invariance	530.28(350)	0.051	0.948	-0.002	-0.001	19.396, $p = 0.20$

Thus, measurement invariance across groups allows us to use multigroup SEM analysis to investigate the moderating effect of generations on a model level. For the multigroup model, the fit indices showed good fits to the data ($\chi^2 = 541.035$, $\text{df} = 356$, $p < 0.001$, $\text{RMSEA} = 0.051$, $\text{SRMR} = 0.066$, $\text{CFI} = 0.947$, and $\text{TLI} = 0.943$). Thus, the conceptual model can be accepted for assessing the hypothesized relationships, as shown in Figure 3.

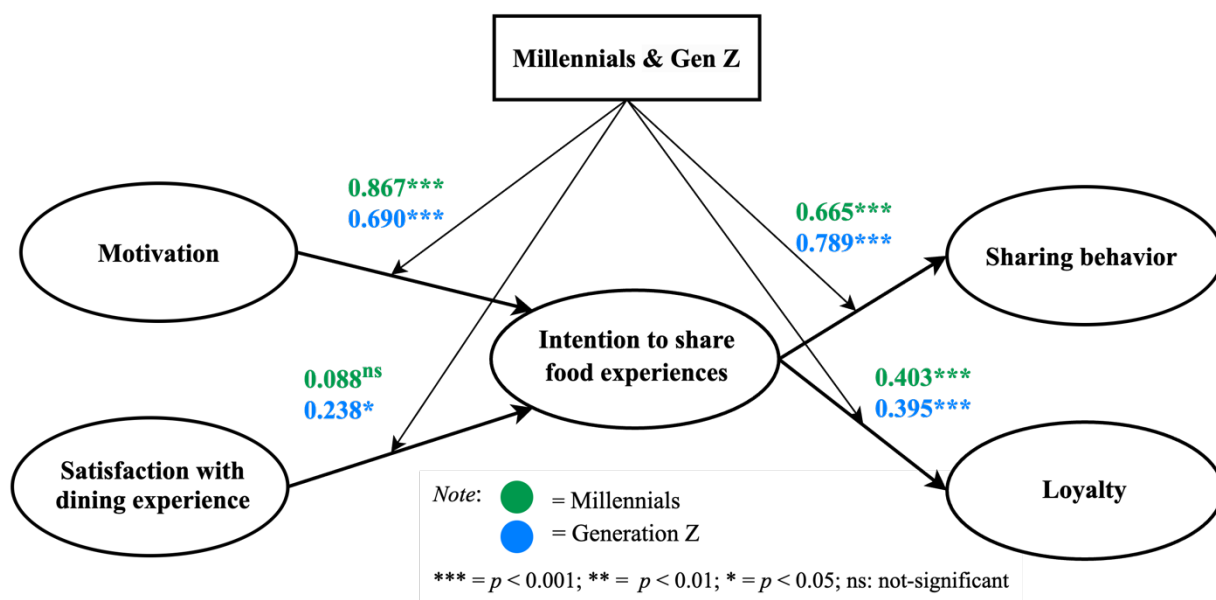


Figure 3 Multigroup structural model.

Considering the moderating role of the generational effect, the overall differences in the path coefficients of the two groups are presented in Table VIII. At first, the motivation positively influenced the intention to share food experiences on social media for both Millennials and Gen Z ($\beta_{\text{Millennials}} = 0.867, p < 0.001$; $\beta_{\text{Gen Z}} = 0.690, p\text{-value} < 0.001$), thus supporting H5a. These results show that the effect of motivation on the intention to share food experiences among Millennials is stronger than Gen Z. Whereas, the positive effect of satisfaction on the intention to share food experiences on social media was confirmed for Gen Z ($\beta_{\text{Gen Z}} = 0.238, p\text{-value} < 0.01$) but not for Millennials ($\beta_{\text{Millennials}} = 0.088, p\text{-value} > 0.1$). Hence, H5b is partially supported. Regarding the relationship between sharing intention and actual sharing behaviour, the result found that tourist intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences sharing behaviour for both generations ($\beta_{\text{Millennials}} = 0.665, p\text{-value} < 0.001$; $\beta_{\text{Gen Z}} = 0.789, p\text{-value} < 0.001$). Therefore, H5c is supported. The study also suggests that the intention to share food experiences on social media has a greater impact on sharing behaviour among Gen Z travellers than among Millennials. Next, the intention to share food experiences on social media also has a positive influence on loyalty for both Millennials ($\beta_{\text{Millennials}} = 0.403, p\text{-value} < 0.001$) and Gen Z ($\beta_{\text{Gen Z}} = 0.395, p\text{-value} < 0.001$), supporting H5d.

Table 8 Multigroup analysis results.

Hypotheses	Paths	Standardized Estimates		Results
		Millennials	Gen Z	
H5a	MOT → INT	0.867***	0.690***	Supported
H5b	SAT → INT	0.088 ^{ns}	0.238*	Partially supported
H5c	INT → SB	0.665***	0.789***	Supported
H5d	INT → LOY	0.403***	0.395***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ns: non-significant

Discussion and implications

Conclusions

Sharing dining experiences on social media is a new phenomenon that has emerged with the popularity of social media platforms, particularly among Millennials and Z

users. The empirical findings examined why people share their food experiences on social media, as well as how their intention to share affects their behaviours. The aims of this study are (1) to explore the factors influencing the intention to share food experiences on social media, (2) to examine the effect of sharing food experiences via social media on actual sharing behaviour and loyalty to the destination, and (3) to investigate whether differences between a sample of Millennials and Gen Z travellers influence food experience sharing behaviour through social media. The relationships among motivation, dining satisfaction, sharing intention, sharing behaviour, and loyalty to the destination were investigated in the study. The results reveal intriguing findings that will be discussed in the following sections.

Theoretical implications

The study provides a conceptual framework in the research area of sharing food tourism experiences. The study demonstrates the role of gastronomy and social media in shaping the tourism experience by indicating a significant relationship between motivation and satisfaction with dining experiences, sharing intention on food experiences on social media, sharing behaviour, and loyalty. This research fills gaps in the existing literature, which contributes to the theoretical perspectives as follows:

First, tourist motivation positively influenced the intention to share food experiences on social media for both Millennials and Gen Z tourists (Hypothesis 5a). This finding is consistent with Yang and Lai (2011) and Daxböck *et al.* (2021), which found that motivation plays a significant role in the sharing intention on social networking sites. Some similarities in terms of the positive impact of motivation on behavioural intentions to share food experiences on social media existed in the study by Javed *et al.* (2021) and Yang (2017), who both reported the direct impact of this factor on behavioural intention to share food experiences on social networking sites. Thus, our study highlights that the greater motivation, the more likely tourists share photos to share food experiences on social media. In particular, the research also uncovered that the impact of motivation on the intention to share food experiences on social media was significantly stronger for Millennials than among Generation Z. Interestingly, millennials are more motivated to be willing to share their dining experience than the younger generation. This would be because Millennials have more experience in using social media platforms than Generation Z. Also, they are more likely to use social media

platforms to search and exchange their opinions with others through online communities than Gen Z (Euajarusphan, 2022).

Second, results from Hypothesis 5b show that tourist satisfaction with dining experiences positively influences tourist intention to share food experiences on social media for Gen Z. In contrast, the positive effect of satisfaction on sharing intention is insignificant for Millennials. This study partially supports existing findings on the relationship between restaurant satisfaction and eWOM intention by Yang (2017) who observed that people may not intend to share their food experience even if their restaurant experience is satisfactory, in accordance with Tsao and Hsieh (2012). However, past research has pointed out the significant role of satisfaction levels in word-of-mouth behavioural intentions (Molinari *et al.*, 2008). Satisfied people tend to be linked to sharing intention is consistent with studies conducted by Uslu (2020), indicating customer satisfaction is a key predictor of individuals' willingness to spread eWOM. This factor affects the sharing intention of Gen Z travellers. This may be due to tourists' satisfaction with dining experiences such as food variety, ambience, staff service, and food cultural experience, triggering the propensity to share reviews regarding food tourism via online networking (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). While for millennial tourists, it is possible that they do not only share their experiences when they are satisfied, but they intentionally share when they have bad experiences. This assumption is supported by Alqadi *et al.* (2020), which found people tend to share and write negative opinions about restaurant experiences on social media. Possibly due to their age and greater life experience, Millennials place a higher value on the tourism experience than Gen Z (Ek Styvén and Foster, 2018).

Third, tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences sharing behaviour in both Millennials and Gen Z (Hypothesis 5c). The results support the study of Lin and Huang (2013) who mentioned that the actual behaviour is directly influenced by behavioural intention (Lin and Huang, 2013). It is also consistent with past studies, confirming that individual intention to share knowledge influences knowledge-sharing behaviour (Yang and Lai, 2011; Yang and Xu, 2021). Prior studies only found that sharing intention plays a mediating role in the relationship between motivation and sharing behaviour. This study confirms the above relationship and provides evidence suggesting that sharing intention partially mediates the connection between satisfaction and sharing behaviour among multi-generational

travellers (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, it is established that the intention to share food experiences on social is a good predictor of an individual's sharing behaviour. The findings recommended that actual sharing behaviour depends on how much people intend to use social media platforms for sharing or posting about their food experiences across a range of generations. According to multigroup analysis, the finding evidently provides that the intention to generate online content about cuisine experiences tends to have a greater effect on Gen Z sharing behaviour than Millennials. Based on this possibility, therefore, the sharing behaviour may be related to generational differences since Millennials seem to prefer online social sites to communicate and interact with people more than other generations (Yadav and Rai, 2017). This could be because they are happy and feel it important to provide feedback and comments about their consumption actively, which they may be more likely to engage in social behaviours, such as sharing.

Finally, tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media positively influences travellers' loyalty to the destination in both Millennials and Gen Z (Hypothesis 5d). The result is consistent with prior studies on sharing travel-related experiences on social media, indicating sharing intentions on social media has a positive impact on revisiting the same destination (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). In a similar perspective but a different variable, the previous study by Wong *et al.* (2020) supports that sharing memorable tourism experiences on mobile social media leads people to be willing to revisit destinations. It is consistent with the results of Li *et al.* (2021), indicating that writing or sharing positive travel experiences on social media can encourage travellers' post-trip evaluations. Furthermore, our study explores how the intention to share food experiences on social media affects the loyalty of both Millennials and Gen Z travellers. The current study offers new insights into sharing behaviour. It could provide the theoretical support for sharing food tourism that travellers are more likely to be loyal to the destination or product if they are more intention to share or recommend their experiences to others.

Based on the exploration, this finding is meaningful in expanding the knowledge of sharing behaviour about food tourism to the area of online communities. Moreover, the study also advances knowledge by filling a research gap in generational viewpoints between millennial travellers and Gen Z by examining generational differences in tourist behaviour in sharing food experiences (Yang, 2017).

Managerial implications

The study also provides some managerial implications. The findings can be used as a guideline to boost the awareness of food tourism, activity, and related business through understanding the concept of food experience sharing with the public community because behavioural intention or future behaviour is the leading determinant to evaluate the success of a travel marketing plan. As a result, the findings of this study can be used to build marketing strategies that are more efficient at raising product sales. This study also recommends that food-related businesses or organizations promote food tourism in the destination by offering forums or official websites for customers so they can establish their own communities and provide comments on the products and services they receive by the customer because the eWOM from customers are power sourced to motivate other users to purchase or consume their product and services more than the direct advertisement.

This study provides evidence that Millennials and Z are distinct in terms of motivation, dining satisfaction, sharing intention on food experiences, sharing behaviour, and loyalty, which provides a reference framework for practitioners to formulate proper strategies, mechanisms, and resource investment in pursuing the performance of knowledge sharing among organization members in knowledge management. This can give practitioners a framework for building effective strategies by designing relevant to the targeted market based on a generational segmentation approach to encourage people to be willing to share and review food experiences on social media since it reflects loyalty to the brand or destination.

In addition, it is crucial to pay attention to the factors that trigger their willingness to share their dining experiences across generations, as it would help to develop loyalty to the destination. Therefore, it is strongly advised for marketers to respond enthusiastically to those who share posts about food experiences in their destinations. For example, they should encourage travellers to include location or destination hashtags in their posts. To make it easier to identify visitor reactions and engage them with creative responses. This practice can increase a traveller's assessment of the experience along with their engagement and loyalty to the destination.

Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations because of the respondents. Most of the sampling in this study is national tourists. This limits the interpretation of the results from the data analysis. Therefore, future research may explore this further multigroup analysis between local and foreign travellers to uncover the role of sharing food experiences on social media while travelling on their behaviour. In addition, based on the diversity of respondents, moderator variables such as demographic characteristics can be considered to observe the moderating effect between factors influencing the intention to share food experiences. Eventually, expanding this comparative study to other areas and even different tourism contexts may provide more evidence of how tourists share food experiences and their behavioural intentions.

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CONCLUSIONS

The widespread trend of posting food photos and sharing their dining experiences on social media has become a cultural phenomenon with far-reaching effects on individuals, businesses, and the tourism industry. This thesis aims to provide a theoretical framework to explain travellers' behaviour in sharing their food experiences on social media platforms during the trip.

The thesis is structured as a compendium of three articles, with each article focusing on a specific approach to achieving its own objectives. By examining multiple aspects of the behaviour of tourists sharing food experiences on social media, the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. When taken together, all three articles accomplish the general objectives and contribute to addressing the overarching research questions as detailed in the explanation that follows.

First, to fulfilment of the first article's objective of identifying the travellers' perspectives on food experiences at the destination, multiple Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques with sentiment analysis, were used to explore how people feel and what they share regarding their food experiences online. According to the specific objectives of this article, the finding provides; first, classifying hidden sentiments of travellers towards food experiences that people express online. Second, identifying the key attributes of experience sharing related to food activities in online reviews. Finally, this article attained its objective of finding out how these experiences have evolved by comparing before and after the Covid-19 crisis. Some differences in food experiences between both periods are identified in order to suggest potential opportunities for improving food tourism at the destination.

Second, given the dimensions of travellers' motivation behind sharing their food experiences on social media, the second article aims to develop and validate a measurement scale for those motivations in sharing content related to cuisines online during the trip. The findings provided a multidimensional construct with distinct dimensions of travellers' motivation in sharing food experiences on social media. As a result, this study gives valuable insights into travellers' motivation for sharing food experiences in online communities as a new conceptual measurement model. In particular, establishing a motivation measurement scale for sharing food-related

content on social media during travel is believed to contribute a theoretical framework to the gastronomy tourism context. From a practical perspective, this study also highlighted the importance of considering these indicators for the development of targeted and effective marketing strategies by the government, entrepreneurs, and other relevant organizations within the gastronomic tourism industry.

Finally, the objective of the third article is firstly to investigate the factors that influence the intention to share food experiences while travelling on social media, secondly, to examine the impact of sharing intention on tourist behaviour and loyalty; and thirdly, to determine whether or not there is a difference in these relationships between Millennials and Gen Z.. The finding reveals the difference in behaviour among the two groups in sharing experiences online. Firstly, tourist motivation influenced both Millennial and Generation Z travellers' intentions to share food experiences on social media. Motive factors play an important role when determining tourists' intention to share their food experiences with others on social media. Notably, millennials are more motivated than younger generations to share their food experiences. Secondly, Gen Z tourists' intention to share food experiences on social media is influenced by their satisfaction with dining experiences while for Millennials travellers, they may not only share their experiences publicly when they are satisfied, but they intentionally share when they have bad experiences. Thirdly, the intention to share eating experiences on social media is a strong indicator of people's sharing behaviour. The sharing habit may be connected to generational differences. The findings suggested actual behaviour across generations is determined by how much individuals intend to utilise social media platforms for sharing about their food experiences. Finally, the Intention to share food experiences with others on social media can lead people to be loyal to the place or product for multi-generation in a similar manner.

The findings of these articles provide theoretical contributions to the research in terms of broadening the understanding of food tourism sharing behaviour to online communities. First, the study is crucial for expanding the theoretical perspectives on sharing behaviour about food tourism via social media, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to extracting information from online reviews on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TripAdvisor (Mehraliyev et al., 2022), this study is the first to empirically present the conceptual attributes of food experiences shared in Google Map reviews. Thus, we strongly encourage future studies in tourism

and hospitality to focus on this platform as a potent resource for data analysis in tourism and hospitality.

In terms of methodology, this study has discussed the applications of using sentiment analysis and employing NLP tools to obtain significant insights into travellers' perceptions of food experiences expressed in online reviews. Furthermore, the study not only empirically validates the multidimensional model of motivations but also contributes to the academic literature by comparing the levels of different motivations to share food experiences on social media.

The study also advances knowledge by bridging a research gap in perspectives of generational effect as the moderating factor. It underscores the pivotal role of gastronomy and social media in shaping the tourism experience by revealing a significant relationship between motivation, satisfaction with dining experiences, sharing intention on food experiences on social media, sharing behaviour and loyalty.

This research conveys a framework for practitioners to use in developing appropriate strategies and resource investments for pursuing the performance of information sharing across organization members in knowledge management. As there are differences in the relationships among constructs, the results provide a reference framework for practitioners to formulate specific strategies in pursuing the performance of knowledge sharing among organization members in knowledge management based on the market segment.

Moreover, the study raises the public's awareness of food tourism, activities, and related businesses by better understanding the concept of sharing food experiences on social media. The results can help to develop marketing tactics in engaging food tourism and producing tourist experiences with more intensity for both generations by understanding generational variations in tourist behaviour of sharing food experiences.

By acknowledging and responding to these shared experiences, marketers can cultivate a sense of connection and appreciation among their customers. This strategy increases brand loyalty and the likelihood of positive word-of-mouth recommendations. As a result, it is essential for marketers to prioritise and actively engage with individuals who share their food experiences, as this can significantly contribute to the success of their marketing campaigns.

The findings gathered in this study have practical implications for tourism marketing and management in Thailand. Under the current tourism policy highlighting Thai food as a soft power tool to drive the economy and tourism, understanding tourist behaviour of sharing food experiences on social media and perceptions of their food experiences in Ayutthaya will empower the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), local authorities and private sectors in shaping future marketing strategies. More importantly, TAT, Ayutthaya local authorities and the private sector should be fully cognisant of the power of eWOM. The power of positive online reviews and comments can make the food experiences at the destination go viral, while negative feedback can have a domino effect. By encouraging individuals to share their opinions and food experiences on social media and fostering social interaction with customers through these platforms, businesses can enhance not only their service quality but also bring in new customers while retaining loyal customers.

This research has some limitations that should be considered. Regarding the analysis of food experiences, the online review data were collected from a single platform: Google Maps. Hence, it's possible that the result could be biased. To mitigate the chances of this possibility happening, research in the future could evaluate and compare the various platforms for the authenticity of food experience reviews' attributes. Furthermore, this dissertation focuses on sharing food experiences on social media by surveying only one specific area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. To provide further evidence on how tourists share food experiences and their behavioural intention, it is recommended for future studies to consider a cross-cultural perspective, since the different cultural contexts might influence the ways in which tourists engage in sharing food experiences and its impact on their behavioral intentions.

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