

## Current Trends and Practices in Tourism



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## Chapter 11 Gastronomy Tourism and Social Media

### Introduction

In addition to being a basic need of individuals, food consumption has become a central element in the motivation of visiting destinations (Vukolic et al., 2022). Especially recently, the aspiration of individuals to taste new and exotic foods and to have a cultural experience in the destination has gained popularity in the selection of destinations to visit. In the related literature, this situation is assessed with the concept of gastronomy tourism, which focuses on exploring the culinary traditions of a particular region or nation (Mwangi & Mwalongo, 2023).

Tourists are influenced by many factors such as the location of the destination, past experience, and commentaries about the destination when deciding on the destinations they will visit within the scope of gastronomy tourism. Nevertheless, with the technology rapidly developing, tourists have the opportunity to access information about the destinations they will visit more easily and quickly in advance. Particularly, with the social media applications that are widely in use nowadays, tourists can acquire numerous photos, comments, etc. about the destination they will visit. Tourists can form a positive or negative attitude towards the destination in line with this information, which has brought about the effective use as well as effective dissemination of social media applications in destination marketing. In this context, it is important to determine the expectations of tourists by means of both gastronomy tourism and the concept of social media (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020; Vukolic et al., 2022; Alexander, 2023; Chen et al., 2023).

### Gastronomy Tourism

It is held in the literature that the origin of the word gastronomy stems from the combination of the Greek words *gaster* (stomach) and *nomos* (rule) (Rojas-Rivas et al., 2020; Ueda & Poulain, 2021; Cuffia et al., 2023); As for the definition of gastronomy in the related literature, it is seen that there is no common definition and there are many different definitions, despite the fact that it is expressed as “*the art of preparing and eating good food*” (Rojas-Rivas et al., 2020). On the other hand, the Turkish Language Association defines gastronomy as “*the curiosity of*

*eating food well*” and “*a wholesome, well-organized, pleasant and delicious kitchen, food order and system*”. Sharma et al. (2022) define gastronomy as “*a concept that conveys a destination’s identity, knowledge and information about culture, place identity, tradition and people in the form of culinary dishes*”.

Gastronomy holds an important place in the tourism industry, for it represents local culture in terms of traditions, habits and history (Sharma et al., 2022). The concept of gastronomy tourism can also be termed as culinary tourism, food tourism, nutrition tourism, gourmet tourism and taste tourism in the literature (Cömert & Özkaya, 2014; Polat & Aktaş-Polat, 2020; Sio, Fraser & Fredline, 2021; Hsu et al., 2022). The concept of gastronomy tourism is defined by Wolf (2002) as “*travels to discover and enjoy the food and beverages of a destination and to enjoy unique and unforgettable gastronomic experiences*”. Ignatov & Smith (2006) define it as “*tourism trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional foods (including beverages), or the observation and study of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools) represent a significant motivation or activity.*” (As cited in Guzel & Apaydin, 2016).

As can be inferred from the definitions, tourists that take part in gastronomy tourism are in the pursuit of tasting memorable food and beverages in their travel behavior. Tourists might characterize the local foods of destinations they visit as different from what they have consumed in their daily routines, which may lead them to perceive local foods as attractive (Apak & Gürbüz, 2023), for local food differs from other food with respect to such functions as physiological, social, etc. Local food represents local rules, processes, traditions, and rituals in a symbolic manner and has a social and cultural character (Bölükbaş, 2023). These being the case, gastronomy is regarded as one of the cultural attractions of a destination. In this context, gastronomy is a key concept in destination promotion strategy, for gastronomy can differentiate destinations from their competitors and characterize a destination as attractive. Hence, destinations can benefit from campaigns that highlight the differences in their cuisine culture in tourism promotion activities (Nugroho & Putri, 2023).

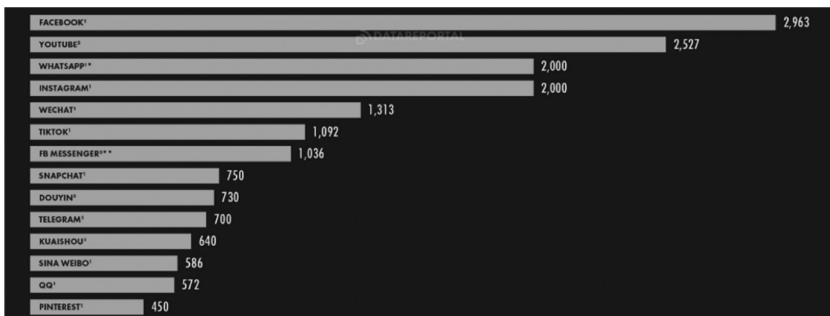
Today, thanks to the technological developments, it has become more accessible and faster for tourists to obtain information about the destinations. In this regard, resources for tourists to information-access have increased, their styles of travel planning have varied, and even their opportunities to book and share their travel experiences with other people have improved. Specifically, with the extensive use of social media applications, tourists have the opportunity to obtain information on the destination in advance upon deciding on the destination they want to visit. This information can be obtained by tourists both from the destination’s social media accounts and from the comments, photos, etc. shared by those who visit the establishments. This information help tourists form

a positive or negative attitude towards the given destination and may influence their intention to perform the visit behavior. In this context, destinations should be able to manage social media applications, with a great impact today, well and pay attention to their marketing activities (Onurlubaş et al., 2016; Alan et al., 2018; Faraç & Cinnioğlu, 2021; Sarıkaya & Özdemir, 2022; Baba et al., 2023; Bölükbaş, 2023; Demirbulat, 2023; Gençer & Ceylan, 2023).

## **Social Media**

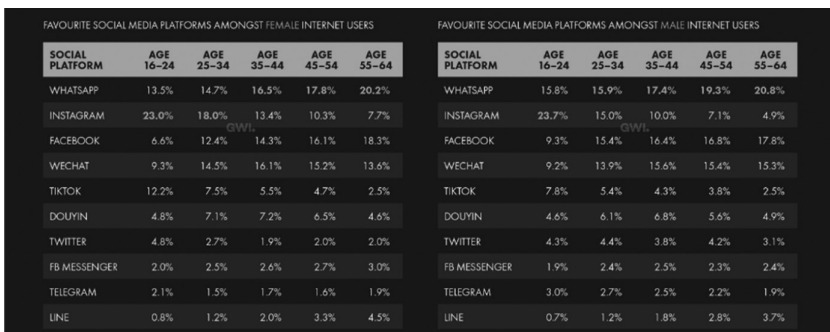
The concept of media refers to the communication of advertising, ideas or information through publications or channels, on the other hand; the concept of social refers to the interaction of individuals within a group or community (Alan et al., 2018). Also known as “social network”, “social web” and “social networking sites” in the literature, social media is defined as a sharing platform that is related to the concepts of Web 2.0 and “user-generated content”, created, published and constantly changed by the joint initiative of many participants, not just a person or an organization (Kaya et al., 2022). Social media differs from traditional media in that it paves the ways for any individual to produce, comment and contribute to the content of social media (Solmaz et al., 2013). Social media are online resources that individuals use to share contents such as videos, photos, images, writings, cartoons, ideas, gossip, news and these resources include blogs, vlogs, social networks, message boards, podcasts and wikis (Barutçu & Tomaş, 2013). Social media applications are web-based platforms which gather and integrate a variety of user information as well as creating a user profile and page, thus enabling users to connect. As a communication technology, social media empowers and facilitates interaction among users and information resources. With the growing use of social media, individuals have started to spend further time on virtual platforms offered by social media tools. In this new communication and interaction settings, individual have more opportunities to put forward their ideas, opinions or judgments (Zorlu & Candan, 2023). Due to these features, social media is influential in many areas, particularly in those related to the service sector. In other words, with the realization of the existing potential of social media, this concept has turned into a key issue for business establishments and these establishments have begun to develop strategies in this context (Aktan, 2018). Specifically, social media has become one of the most operative tools for tourism businesses (Barakazı, 2023; Baykara & Yinal, 2023). Within this perspective, in order to serve well for promotional objectives, destinations desire to mobilize curiosity and purchasing motivations by aiming to position their strengths well in the minds of consumers (Kuzucanlı, & Barakazı, 2023). The main reason for this is the fact that individuals at the phase

of destination decision process can make their vacation plans through social media, can access the information they need, and can have the opportunity to search, find and share the information for tourism-related product and destination choices (Baykara & Yinal, 2023). Destinations, amusement centers, hotels, and restaurants focus their aim on creating a reliable source of information for potential tourists and followers by sharing their former experiences about a number of touristic activities (Zorlu & Candan, 2023). In this context, it will be of great use for business establishments that want to develop marketing activities to recognize the activities of individuals towards social media applications. In this context, the most used social media applications worldwide (Figure 1), the change of these applications by age and gender (Figure 2) and the purposes of use (Figure 3) are reported below in the figures.



**Figure 1.** The world’s most used social media platforms (April 2023)

Resource: <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users> (Access: 22.06.2023)



**Figure 2.** Favourite social media platforms (April 2023)

Resource: <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users> (Access: 22.06.2023)

16 TO 24 YEARS OLD		25 TO 34 YEARS OLD		35 TO 44 YEARS OLD		45 TO 54 YEARS OLD		55 TO 64 YEARS OLD	
FRIENDS & FAMILY	46.5%	FRIENDS & FAMILY	46.5%	FRIENDS & FAMILY	48.0%	FRIENDS & FAMILY	50.8%	FRIENDS & FAMILY	52.3%
FILL UP SPARE TIME	41.8%	FILL UP SPARE TIME	38.2%	READ NEWS STORIES	36.5%	READ NEWS STORIES	34.9%	READ NEWS STORIES	34.8%
FIND CONTENT (E.G. VIDEOS)	33.4%	READ NEWS STORIES	34.4%	FILL UP SPARE TIME	35.5%	FILL UP SPARE TIME	33.3%	FILL UP SPARE TIME	29.8%
SEE TRENDING TOPICS	33.0%	FIND CONTENT (E.G. VIDEOS)	31.3%	FIND CONTENT (E.G. VIDEOS)	27.9%	FIND CONTENT (E.G. VIDEOS)	26.2%	FIND PRODUCTS TO BUY	22.6%
READ NEWS STORIES	30.1%	SEE TRENDING TOPICS	29.8%	SEE TRENDING TOPICS	27.4%	FIND PRODUCTS TO BUY	25.1%	FIND CONTENT (E.G. VIDEOS)	21.5%
IDEAS: THINGS TO DO & BUY	27.7%	IDEAS: THINGS TO DO & BUY	27.2%	FIND PRODUCTS TO BUY	26.5%	SEE TRENDING TOPICS	24.6%	SHARE & DISCUSS OPINIONS	20.3%
INFLUENCERS & CELEBRITIES	24.5%	FIND PRODUCTS TO BUY	26.7%	IDEAS: THINGS TO DO & BUY	25.5%	IDEAS: THINGS TO DO & BUY	23.4%	IDEAS: THINGS TO DO & BUY	19.5%
FIND PRODUCTS TO BUY	23.9%	WATCH LIVE STREAMS	25.5%	WATCH LIVE STREAMS	23.2%	SHARE & DISCUSS OPINIONS	22.7%	SEE TRENDING TOPICS	19.4%
MAKE NEW CONTACTS	23.8%	SEE CONTENT FROM BRANDS	24.0%	ACTIVITIES FOR WORK	23.1%	ACTIVITIES FOR WORK	20.7%	FIND LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE	17.9%
WATCH LIVE STREAMS	23.8%	WATCH OR FOLLOW SPORTS	23.9%	SHARE & DISCUSS OPINIONS	23.0%	MAKE NEW CONTACTS	20.2%	MAKE NEW CONTACTS	16.9%

**Figure 3.** Main motivation for using social media (April 2023)

Resource: <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users> (Access: 22.06.2023)

When the figures are examined, it is observed that Facebook is the most used social media application worldwide, followed by YouTube, Whatsapp and Instagram applications, respectively. In addition, it has also been seen that there is a difference in the preference of social media applications by age and gender and that there is difference in age factor in terms of the purpose of social media use.

## Conclusion

Thanks to the development of technology, it has become easier for people to access information. Particularly by means of the social media applications extensively in use today, people can easily get information about individuals, businesses, destinations, countries, etc. that they do not know. Moreover, they have the opportunity to share and spread their own experiences and to share with other individuals in a similar manner. In this framework, businesses with an objective to keep up to date and gain competitive advantage should be able to benefit from the information that could be accessed easily and fast, for it is indicated that social media plays an immense role in the decision of individuals' purchasing or in their choice of destination. Vukolic et al. (2022) put that more than 80 % of tourists start their travels online. This being the case, it can be thought that social media has an important impact on gastronomy tourism, a popular concept today owing to fact that the local dishes and their rituals or shows that are popular on social media can make that destination or establishment attractive. For this reason, nowadays many sectors rely on the effective power of social media to have a competitive gain.

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