

# The Impact of Online Gastronomy Image and Gastronomy Tourism on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

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## Abstract

Today, restaurants provide people with different experiences to meet their basic nutritional needs, as well as to have a nice and quality time. In this way, it contributes to the socialization of people who prefer restaurant businesses. The increasingly competitive environment among restaurants makes the product and service quality of the enterprises sustainable by providing development by determining the quality of their products and services according to the expectations and wishes of the customers. In order for restaurants to continue their activities successfully, they need to use internet pages and social media tools effectively. With the development of information technologies, businesses receive feedback from the comments made by the guests and have an idea about the product service quality. In order for restaurant businesses to achieve long-term success, they must be able to meet the expectations and demands of their guests. Guests are actively using social media tools to gain experience and make a decision. Offering word of mouth communication, TripAdvisor provides great support for guests in the decision-making process. Evaluating TripAdvisor and guest experience comments under the gastronomy image of individuals in restaurant selection, and specifying the elements they pay attention to in the gastronomy image are of great importance for restaurants to achieve sustainable success. For this reason, the effect of gastronomy image, word of mouth marketing and gastronomy image on destination image and identity has been mentioned.

## Introduction

In addition to meeting the basic nutritional needs of people, restaurant businesses offer many opportunities such as having a good time with

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their relatives, experiencing different tastes, having new experiences and socializing. In today's increasingly competitive environment among restaurants, businesses play an active role in making their progress sustainable by determining their product and service quality according to the expectations and wishes of their customers. In an intensely competitive environment, restaurant businesses need to use the internet and social media tools effectively in order to carry out their activities successfully. Thanks to information technology tools, restaurants can update their products and services by getting feedback from the comments made by the customers. The long-term success of restaurant businesses allows them to develop their products, position their products and services, and provide effective marketing opportunities by meeting the demands and needs of customers (Alonso, 2021). While visitors prefer restaurants; atmosphere, menu/food variety, food quality/health, pricing, regional characteristics, cleanliness quality, service quality, crowding, employee behavior, service speed, nutritional content, child option, working hours of the business, image and brand perception of the business, paid value for money is affected by many factors such as service and product quality (Albayrak, 2014). Today, people's preference for the internet and various social networks and online channels to gain experience also affects restaurant choices.

Social media has become a channel that visitors apply to obtain information before travel and restaurant preferences, and it also affects the decision-making process in various ways. Social media applications such as TripAdvisor offer the opportunity for people who travel and visit restaurants and hotels to share their experiences in places and places they have visited with other users through comments (Aydın, 2016). These comments directly affect the behavior of people who tend to visit. In addition, it allows users to be active in searching, finding, organizing, sharing and socializing information (Çiftçi and Yetgin, 2016).

Restaurant products are considered as products in the risky group in the decision to purchase. Therefore, when compared with other services and products, it is concluded that more research should be done before purchasing and before choosing a restaurant (Huang, Chou and Lin, 2010; Eren and Çelik, 2017). It is observed that both positive and negative comments are included in the social media accounts of the food and beverage businesses that are the subject of the research. Customer comments are of great importance for restaurant businesses to improve their service quality and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Understanding the guests visiting the restaurant; In terms of detecting complaints and satisfaction of practitioners and contributing to the improvement of service conditions of practitioners,

TripAdvisor site user comments are found in the studies of many researchers in national and international literature (Lei and Law, 2015; Dalgıç, Birdir and Güler, 2016; Erdem and Yay, 2017; Laksono, Sungkono, Sarno, and Wahyuni, 2019). For this reason, this issue is emphasized and the effect of gastronomy image on tripadvisor comments is included. It is thought that it will contribute to the literature since there are not many studies on the effect of Tripadvisor comments on the gastronomy image in the literature.

### 1.0 Gastronomy Tourism and Food Image

With the emergence of globalization, it has become increasingly fast and easy for tourists to obtain information about the destinations they will visit in advance. In this process, among all the cultural attractions in the destination region, the curiosity of trying new food products based on gastronomy, interest in local cuisine, local products highlight the local food identity (Boyne, Williams and Hall, 2002; Hijalager and Richards, 2002). The important role of culinary culture and gastronomy on tourism is of great importance in the recognition of many destinations by tourists (Boniface, 2003; Quan and Wang, 2004). While the visitors of the region are marketing by word of mouth on social media, by sharing the photos, films and all the documents documenting their experiences with the destination image; started to show people who will visit this destination in the future (Frochot, 2003). Visitors develop some feelings, thoughts and attitudes about a destination by using the information shared about destinations on social media sites. Considering the importance of culinary culture and gastronomy on creating a destination image; It contributes to the image of the destination by influencing the destination selection and decision-making process of the visitors (Ritchie, Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

Gastronomy image; It can be expressed as the development of beliefs, feelings and impressions about each situation involving food and beverages, food and beverage businesses, food and beverage culture and food and beverage-related activities, festivals, events in a destination. As components of the gastronomic image, it is important that the food and beverages consist of elements that reflect the culture of the destination region. Food and shelter are one of the physiological needs of human beings. People use one third of their food and beverage expenditures for gastronomic tourism activities (Meler and Cerovic, 2003). It has been observed that 7.2 billion dollars were spent until 2010 in tourism activities based on food and beverage, especially in Australia and Canada (Pmero, 2005). Within the scope of the research carried out at Bangkok University, the dishes in the Thailand region; The diversity of appearance, aroma, color and taste has affected the

attractiveness of the region. Gastronomy tourism, Hall and Mitchell (2005), in their study, suggested that the most important motivating factor while experiencing the qualities of first and second class food producers, food festivals, restaurants and food tasting areas in specialist food production regions is the element of travel and the food makes the region visit attractive by tourists. continues (Hjalager and Richards, 2002). Food and gastronomy form an attraction force. In this way, it becomes an experience and cultural phenomenon created in the region (Tikkanen, 2007). According to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), more than six in ten people, or 63%, who travel for gastronomy and food attraction, and 85% of those who travel for gastronomy, state that they enjoy experiencing local cuisines during the trip (NRA, 2007: Stewart, Bramble and Ziraldo, 2008). Food experiences help tourists to understand the differences in destinations between the food cultures they are used to (Hegarty and O' Mahoney, 2001). Reynolds (1993), in his work in the field of food and beverage, supports tourists in understanding the social and economic lifestyle in a destination region or on a country. Researches about different and authentic dishes of tourists always draw attention. The lobster culture in Maine in the literature revealed that green mussels in New Zealand are softer and sweeter than other mussels. In Japanese dishes, there are specific types of food in their destination regions. Rimmington and Yuskel (1998), in their study on tourists, revealed that gastronomy is the fourth factor while expressing the general satisfaction of tourists visiting destination regions for Turkish cuisine culture (Hu and Ritchie, 1993). While tourists visit destinations that they are not accustomed to in general; it focuses on health risks, housing situation and especially what they will eat there (Cohen and Avleli, 2004). In their study, Beardsworth and Keil (1997) revealed that food consumption is not only the function of eating, but also that food consumption improves the taste experience. In this way, the perception of eating etiquette and food cultures of people who are curious about local food has developed (Cohen and Avlevi, 2004).

## **1.2. Gastronomy Image and Destinaons Image**

The image of the destination region is of great importance in the thoughts and comments of tourists about a destination. In the studies carried out to determine the factors that are effective in creating the image of the destination region, it is emphasized that the culinary culture is closely related to the destination image. It is seen that culinary culture is one of the main factors that affect a destination such as the natural environment and historical ruins (Eren and Çelik, 2017). It is important for the awareness

of the destination region to organize and promote the foods and beverages that are produced locally in a destination region and reflect the destination characteristics as events and festivals. For this reason, both local products and organic natural products increase the destination attractiveness of the region (Henderson, 2009). There are different encouraging factors such as physical characteristics, cultural values, status and prestige in the eating and drinking behaviors of tourists. The use of new recipes originating from the places where food and beverage activities take place or learned by the tourists in their social lives affects their individual status. For this reason, it has an important role in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out in the creation of the gastronomy image (Chang, Kivela and Mak, 2010).

Destination zones; It is expressed as the whole of the places where people want to travel with the intention of traveling and within a certain period of time. It is also expressed as the whole of the areas, places, regions and points that are targeted, desired to be reached and intended to go while tourists travel (Yaraşlı, 2007). In the tourism sector, it is formed by the combination of many different geographical, economic, cultural and social factors. Tourists buy the final products that consist of different factors, experience travel experiences related to certain regions, interpret their holiday experiences and share them on social media. In this way, the regions where the tourists have carried out their activities are expressed as “tourism destination regions” in the tourism sector and in the literature (Yavuz, 2007). In order for a region to be expressed as a destination region, it must have various characteristics. At the beginning of these features; Recreational park areas, museums, historical sites and similar remarkable elements of businesses related to image perception, accessibility, accommodation, eating and drinking are included (İlban, 2007). While looking at the literature, while expressing the importance of the dining experience for a destination, Baloğlu and McCleary (1999) emphasized in their studies that the destination image constitutes the whole of the comments “consisting of individuals’ beliefs, thoughts and impressions about a place or destination”. Gastronomy image; It is possible to mention that individuals constitute the whole of their beliefs about the food and beverages in a destination region. When we look at the literature, it is seen that the studies emphasizing that the destination region finds an identity with the gastronomy image are limited to those of 2000 and later (Karim and Chi, 2010; Choe and Kim, 2018; Eren and Çelik, 2017; Lertputtarak, 2012; Akyol, 2019). Although it is stated that gastronomy is effective in travel preferences, it is seen that the number of studies expressing this relationship is low (Eren and Çelik, 2017; Wang, 2015). It is seen that

the main reason for this is the inability of the studies to go beyond the theoretical framework. For this reason, Boyne (2003) emphasizes that it is necessary to focus on applications in his studies.

Qu, Kim and Im (2011) who carry out destination image studies, emphasized that during the branding of the destination region, especially in the management of the image, it will have a great role in the separation of destinations from other destination regions and becoming a unique destination preference point. The fact that the destination region is visited by tourists and has the feature of attracting potential visitors strengthens the image of the destination. Beerli and Martin (2004) stated that in order for tourists to have a real visit experience, the image perception of the destination regions and the food and beverage potential of that destination should be developed.

Evaluating the gastronomy image as a unique attraction for the destination image, Karim and Chi (2010); Berg and Sevon (2014); Choe and Kim (2018); Eren and Celik (2017); Horng, Liu, Chiu and Tsai (2012); Khoo and Badarulzaman (2014); Lertputtarak (2012); Okumus, Kock, Scantlebury and Okumus (2013); Wang (2015) and Akyol (2019) studies are included. The image of gastronomy contributes to the creation of the image of the destination image of the country. Gastronomy image is the increase in tourism expenditures in gastronomic tourism, the extension of the tourism season, the sustainability of local, environmental and cultural heritage, the creation of new business opportunities, the increase in infrastructure services and investments, and the enrichment of local cuisine and the development of local people. It contributes to the importance of local identities and the destination region. Planning and implementation of all the activities carried out to reveal a destination gastronomy image is of great importance for the promotion of the region (Chang, Kivela and Mak, 2010).

### **1.3. Gastronomy as a Factor Promoting the Image and Identity of Destinations**

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the culinary image affects the destination positively. Destination image and tourist loyalty have become an increasingly distinctive feature with the introduction of gastronomy. It is seen as evidence that the number of studies examining the relationship between gastronomy on the image of the destination region is examined. Accordingly, Enright (2007) found that tourists' evaluation of the gastronomy image to travel to Hong Kong is a secondary attraction factor in their travel preferences. Fox (2007) suggested that Croatia's gastronomic

identity should be re-examined in order for restaurants, hotels and destination regions to gain competitive advantage. He emphasizes that wine tourism is important in terms of the identity of the destination in countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. He made recommendations for destinations with development potential in New Zealand and Europe. Duttagupta (2007) analyzes the contextual gap in relation to the concept of gastronomy image in the Indian region. In this way, he examined the effects of customer satisfaction and behavioral intention on gastronomy and travel experience. Karim (2010) compares the perceived image with the effect of a gastronomy and local cuisine culture image on the destination in terms of tourists. In this way, he explained the connection between France, Italy and Thailand. Chang (2010) made suggestions by evaluating the gastronomic behaviors and cultures of Chinese tourists in a different environment such as Australia, their restaurant choices, the food products they ordered and their programs. When tourists consume and enjoy local food, it has been seen as a great value for sustainable tourism and the development of destinations. The gastronomic experience allows them to develop the region, gain experience, feel and connect in the depths of the culture, history and heritage of the region. Evaluation of such foods, gastronomic festivals and gastronomic products, which are ordered if they appreciate the consumption experience, allows them to offer suggestions for the destination.

#### **1.4. Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)**

Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), often referred to as word-of-mouth communication, is seen as a method of exchanging information about various products and services. It has been revealed that customers are successful in changing customer behavior as information is delivered to other customers (Latief, 2019). Consumers benefit companies, products and services that WOM offers a way of marketing communication independent of an institutional intervention (Williams, 2017). Traditionally based on one-way communication, WOM Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has evolved into a wide-ranging and rapidly spreading network communication. Ismagilova (2020), as a consumer statement of EWOM, includes potential customers, actual customers and past customers; It provides an information network that can be accessed by everyone by providing product information flow about a product or business.

WOM is considered sufficient to create the flow of commercial information in touch social media tools. In this way, information is transferred with photographs through brochures and magazines. E-WOM covers a two-way relationship: it provides information transfer through

interpersonal correspondence. Although the power of word-of-mouth has been analyzed for over 40 years, E-WOM is of great importance to advertisers and commentators. E-WOM, which has been the subject of many studies, has been found to be effective on traditional non-service products. Alvin (2013), in their research focused on tourism and hotel management, offers an advantage in the arrival of tourists to the destination region within the scope of accelerated sustainable tourism. Information and communication technologies, together with e-WOM, offer visitors the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences about a product quickly and easily (Park and Kim, 2008). With the development of the Internet, visitors are allowed to interact with each other quickly and comfortably. In this way, the concept of effective interpersonal and word-of-mouth communication (E-WOM) has emerged. Applications that have developed with the spread of the Internet, word-of-mouth communication called E-WOM allow the dissemination of information on the Internet. E-WOM is emphasized as “transferring positive and negative statements of potential, real and former visitors about a product and company to many people and institutions over the internet” (Henning-Thurau, 2004; Filieri and Mcleay, 2014). Sharing on E-WOM; It includes blog pages, virtual communities, communication groups, chat rooms, review sites, and each of the social networking sites. In this virtual environment, information sharing is provided faster and easier. E-WOM reveals the social and psychological consequences that affect the purchasing decision as well as the performance of a product (Sarışık & Özbay, 2012). It offers visitors the opportunity to easily evaluate the products and services that people who have first-hand experience receive in the field of tourism, often through interpersonal word-of-mouth (WOM) channels.

With the development of information technology, a new terminology has developed. This terminology is called Electronic Word of Mouth Communication (E-WOM). Compared to traditional advertising, EWOM is seen as a larger market. EWOM is seen as a responsible advance in information technology from traditional interpersonal communication. It helps consumers find the information they need. By using e-WOM, the positive and negative impact of the details of future potential customers and old customers can be made public by any institution or via the internet. In this way, word-of-mouth marketing has become effective in attracting some of the tourists to tourist attractions. EWOM promotes destination regions that tourists define as good. The fact that a destination region becomes a tourism attraction center increases the desired appearance and consumer retention rate. In this way, it increases customer loyalty. Word of mouth marketing is seen as a powerful measure of consumer happiness. It also



makes them happy and loyal by the tourists. By EWOM, internet and social media; It helps to create goals including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Blog. It has a great impact on the analysis of online tourist reviews.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Gastronomy image is the ideas and thoughts that tourists perceive with the food they experience when they visit the destination. Provides positive feedback for the destination (Karim and Chi, 2010; Chang and Mak, 2018; Polat, 2020). When tourists make food and beverage experiences in the destination they travel, the gastronomy of the destination knows its products. They have knowledge about these products. As a result of this information obtained, tourists perception about destination food is formed. In this way, they share pictures and comments of gastronomy products by sharing their experiences on social media with E-WOM word of mouth marketing. Food in the destination due to perception culture is important for the destination's competitiveness, destination image perception and destination loyalty (İlban, Bezirgan and Çolakoğlu, 2018). According to the study of Choe and Kim (2018), local food occurring in the destination have emphasized that their experiences are important in the image of the destination and in visiting the destination for gastronomic tourism. Hsu and According to the study of Scott (2020), it has been revealed that there is a positive relationship between the dining experience and the destination image. Similarly, in the study of and Yenipinar (2018), local food experiences affect the destination image. Detected. For this reason, the perception of food image has emphasized that it is important in the holistic image of the destination. The gastronomic image of a region is an effective source in the preferences of the visitors who will visit the destination. Stands out as. Local dishes and drinks that tourists who will visit the region can eat here local drinks, eating and drinking places to visit, gastronomic activities they can attend. are important elements. Tourists visiting the region have various ideas in their minds within the framework of the gastronomic items they attend. Behavioral intentions, which include future visits to the area, positive It comes up as examples such as promoting it, recommending it to those who will visit. According to Ryu and Han (2009), the taste, quality, It has been revealed that the nutritional aspect and visual appeal play an important role in the perception of food. Guest (2018) perceived visual appeal of food emphasized that it can increase the quality value. Ryu In the study of et al. (2012) physical environment, It has been mentioned that the quality of food and service has an effect on the image of the restaurant and the image of the restaurant on the perceived value. Wunderlich and Gatto (2016) mentioned that word of

mouth marketing is effective between food selection and perception. It is stated that the gastronomic image is effective in the choice of destination and it plays an indispensable role for the destination. Means playing. (Wijaya et al., 2013; Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). Tourists' orientation to the destination, their influence from the destination and their behavior their intentions from the food that the destination has is affected. In this way, they share their experiences on social media by classifying the food in the destination as gastronomy images. During word-of-mouth marketing, the authenticity of a destination's food, its novelty, local specialties, souvenirs and food presentation share memorable dining experiences (Staphit, 2017). Chandralal In the study of and Valenzuela (2013), the destination Thanks to its gastronomic image, it has been determined that word of mouth marketing of local culture and food creates memorable experiences for the tourists. It represents the number of tourism goods and services sold at the time of decision making of photographs in promoting the destination area. Thanks to the WOM connection, the interpretation of the destination region is affected. However, the results regarding the destination region retain the official nature of traditional WOM and electronic WOM. In the marketing of tourism products, word of mouth can create loyalty among consumers and equal respect and commitment for the sale of services. WOM has the strongest effect on the target audience to create a picture of the products and get an idea. But the impact of E-WOM should not be ignored. Because it provides fast access to the Internet, it secondly delivers the information between time and price to consumers. Transmitting correspondence and comments in the E-WOM system, however, is quite easy to manage. Comments about the destination area can be used by publishing online. Asking travel consultants for their opinion on this matter is more helpful in terms of accessing information in time and cost-effectively. E-WOM does not affect the investment intention in the capital market. The gastronomy of the destination has a significant impact on brand and image investment. It provides a positive effect on the tourists' intention to purchase the tourism product with confidence. It is possible to talk about the existence of a positive and meaningful relationship between E-WOM, which has a great impact on social media marketing, and social media marketing. Using the E-WOM gastronomy image and the destination brand element on social media marketing, it affects the intention to purchase a holiday on tourists. E-WOM offers a meaningful relationship between the destination and the image of gastronomy by offering gastronomy photos, comments and experiences for visitors who want to come to the region and try the gastronomic culture.

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With the development of information technology, a new terminology has developed. This terminology is called Electronic Word of Mouth Communication (E-WOM). Compared to traditional advertising, EWOM is seen as a larger market. EWOM is seen as a responsible advance in information technology from traditional interpersonal communication. It helps consumers find the information they need. By using e-WOM, the details of future potential customers and former customers, positive and negative impact, can be made public by any institution or via the internet. In this way, word-of-mouth marketing has become effective in attracting some of the tourists to tourist attractions. EWOM promotes destination regions that tourists define as good. The fact that a destination region becomes a tourism attraction center increases the desired appearance and consumer retention rate. In this way, it increases customer loyalty. Word of mouth marketing is seen as a powerful measure of consumer happiness. It also makes them happy and loyal by the tourists. By EWOM, internet and social media; It helps to create goals including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Blog. It has a great impact on the analysis of online tourist reviews.

In addition, the interaction between WOM and the gastronomy picture can be influenced by categorizing the most frequently used tourist comments in the promotion of gastronomy by word of mouth in applications on social media impacts. These variables should be established and It can be aimed to analyze analyzed gastronomy products. Future studies may also be conducted to define the impacts of WOM details on the image of the destination depending on various characteristics of a destination; how the brand awards for E-WOM information impacts the image of the destination; what measurements WOM data has and how these dimensions affect the image of the destination.

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