

# From Posts to Plates: Examining Digital Media's Impact on Gastronomic Travel in Bangkok

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## Abstract

This investigation explores how social media channels shape gastronomic tourism in Bangkok by focusing on Thai and international travelers. A cross-sectional quantitative design was adopted, surveying 600 respondents (300 Thai and 300 foreign) to examine how demographic characteristics, confidence in digital content, and perceived culinary value intersect to influence travel decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook emerged as critical sources of user-generated reviews, influencer endorsements, and peer recommendations. Correlation and mediation analyses revealed that trust in social media (Indirect effect = 0.35,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the perceived worth of local dining experiences (Indirect effect = 0.42,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly shape visitors' final choices. Furthermore, frequent use of online platforms was strongly associated with gastronomic tourism decisions ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The larger sample size enhances statistical robustness, allowing for more reliable subgroup analyses, such as comparisons between different age brackets or educational levels. Results highlight the importance of producing visually engaging, credible digital content aimed at younger audiences who rely heavily on social media in their decision-making. They also underscore the need for demonstrating authenticity and cultural immersion, reflecting contemporary travel priorities that emphasize both sustainable and meaningful culinary experiences. These findings provide actionable insights for tourism operators in designing targeted digital marketing campaigns, ultimately leveraging social media to foster Bangkok's identity as a premier gastronomic destination.

**Keywords:** Gastronomic tourism, Social media, Digital influence, Bangkok, User-generated content

## Introduction

Thai gastronomy—recognized for its layered flavors blending sweet, sour, salty, and spicy elements—has long enticed visitors from within and beyond the country. In Bangkok, revered worldwide for its vibrant street food culture, travelers can sample an extensive array

of authentic dishes in bustling locales such as Chinatown (Yaowarat) and Khao San Road. These culinary hotspots not only entice tourists with their unique tastes but also serve as gateways to Thai customs and traditions.

Bangkok's food scene has received significant global acclaim. In 2018, for instance, CNN named it the top city worldwide for street food (CNN Travel, 2018). Such endorsements contribute to tourism's notable share of Thailand's GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). Within this broader tourism economy, gastronomy is a key growth driver, aligning with research indicating that culinary experiences considerably shape destination selection (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012).

Concurrently, social media platforms—Instagram, YouTube, Facebook—are reshaping how people discover, evaluate, and enjoy culinary travel. Through rich visuals and user-generated narratives, travelers often rely on digital interactions to plan their dining itineraries. In tandem, influencer marketing and crowdsourced online reviews have become particularly important in shaping travel behavior, particularly for digitally adept demographics such as Millennials and Gen Z (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored digital media's significance, prompting travelers to rely more on virtual tools for researching and experiencing local cuisines (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2021). As tourist preferences shift toward health, authenticity, and sustainability (Pung & Chiappa, 2020), digital platforms offer culinary businesses in Bangkok an avenue to highlight eco-friendly practices and distinctive cultural experiences. Against this evolving backdrop, the current study probes social media's role in driving food-centric tourism decisions in Bangkok by examining how demographic attributes, trust in digital sources, and perceived value of local dining experiences shape traveler behavior. Findings can aid tourism stakeholders in devising impactful digital marketing plans.

## **Literature Review**

### **Digital Media's Role in Tourism**

Digital platforms—including social networks, blogs, and rating websites—have become essential resources for travelers seeking guidance and sharing experiences (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The emergence of user-generated content (UGC) fundamentally reshaped decision-making processes, as travelers place high confidence in peer-reviewed information, often deeming it more trustworthy and authentic than brand-generated marketing (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012). Moreover, highly visual platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok play a critical role in spotlighting local dishes, street-food vendors, and fine-dining venues, thus influencing how tourists perceive and engage with gastronomic experiences (Smith, 2020).

This digital transformation in tourism is further underscored by the increasing use of artificial intelligence and algorithmic recommendations in online platforms (Gretzel, 2011). Today, social media and travel applications can deliver hyper-personalized content to users, augmenting their interest in specific food destinations. Review-based platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, rich in crowd-sourced opinions, significantly affect how travelers view a city's culinary landscape (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Meanwhile, real-time mobile technology enables spontaneous food-related decisions, as users can instantly check recommendations and availability (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2015).

Additionally, the shift toward short-form video formats and influencer marketing has amplified digital media's impact on gastronomy tourism. Research shows that social media influencers' curated food content fosters credibility and sparks engagement among

prospective tourists (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020). Viral food trends and hashtag campaigns further encourage visitors to seek out specific dining options, reinforcing the link between digital media engagement and tourism behaviors (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015).

### **Growth of Gastronomic Tourism**

Culinary tourism, focusing on local gastronomy, is vital for promoting cultural exchange and providing authentic travel experiences (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). In Bangkok, known for its wide-ranging culinary scene, gastronomy tourism has gained momentum, attracting food lovers globally. The city's street-food culture—featuring bustling night markets and neighborhood vendors—offers an appealing blend of affordability and authenticity (Henderson, 2009). Simultaneously, Michelin-starred restaurants and upscale dining establishments underscore Bangkok's status as a premier foodie destination (Chang et al., 2021).

Recent scholarship indicates that post-pandemic travelers increasingly favor immersive cultural encounters, thus elevating the importance of gastronomic pursuits (Everett & Slocum, 2013). Travel motivations center not only on indulgence but also on sustainable, ethical consumption (Okumus, Koseoglu, & Ma, 2018). The popularity of cooking classes, food trails, and guided tours underscores this shift toward active culinary engagement (Kline et al., 2019).

Furthermore, gastronomy tourism interlinks with destination branding and broader economic growth (Hjalager, 2004). Cities that leverage their culinary heritage effectively often witness higher visitor interest and increased spending on food-related activities (Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2011). In Bangkok's case, international visibility through food awards and social media promotion continues to enhance its reputation as a world-class gastronomic hub.

### **Social Media's Impact on Gastronomy**

Social media's role as a key marketing vehicle for food-related destinations reflects the rising influence of peer-reviewed content and celebrity endorsements (Casaló et al., 2020). Many travelers find user-generated reviews more trustworthy than commercial advertising, reinforcing the importance of social media feedback loops (Fotis et al., 2012). Interactive tools—such as Instagram Reels, live broadcasts, or Q&A sessions—foster engagement and convey authenticity (Lee et al., 2018). In an era of rapid digital evolution, such dynamic connections foster emotional bonds to specific locales, thereby influencing tourists' choices.

Beyond conventional influencer marketing, the gamification of culinary experiences has also gained prominence. Viral content, including mukbang (live-streamed eating) and ASMR food videos, shapes cultural trends and can directly stimulate tourist interest (Seo, 2021). Meanwhile, user-generated food photography and location tagging can promote lesser-known spots, driving foot traffic to specific vendors or restaurants (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Research further indicates that the visual presentation of food content on these platforms influences taste perceptions and overall satisfaction (Michel, Velasco, & Spence, 2015). Additionally, businesses that apply data analytics and sentiment analysis to social media feedback can refine their offerings to better match traveler preferences (Kwok & Yu, 2013).

### **Post-Pandemic Dynamics**

The COVID-19 pandemic substantially altered tourism demand, emphasizing hygiene, safety, and sustainable consumption (UNWTO, 2021). Travelers increasingly rely on social media channels to confirm health practices and operational changes, influencing dining

choices and reinforcing digital engagement (Hays et al., 2021). Concomitantly, ethical and locally sourced food options now receive heightened attention as consumers prioritize responsible business practices and cultural respect (Pung & Chiappa, 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic catalyzed the adoption of digital payment methods and contactless dining, reshaping the operational landscape of food tourism (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2021). Menu QR codes and app-based reservation systems have become widely accepted, offering convenience and reassurance to health-conscious travelers (Sigala, 2020). As tourism rebuilds, issues of sustainability and conscientious dining remain paramount (Brouder, 2020). Many visitors now show interest in farm-to-table models and reduced food waste practices, aligning with global shifts toward eco-friendly gastronomic tourism (Saarinen, 2021). Bangkok's culinary sector, adapting to these demands, continues to evolve by integrating greener initiatives and celebrating local ingredients, aligning with research that underscores the growing consumer appetite for responsible gastronomic experiences (Everett & Slocum, 2013).

## **Research Questions**

### **1. Influence on Decision-Making**

How do online media platforms affect Thai and foreign tourists' decisions regarding Bangkok's culinary attractions?

### **2. Demographic Considerations**

Which demographic factors (e.g., age, education, gender) most strongly shape attitudes and behaviors toward gastronomic tourism?

### **3. Platform Preferences**

Which online channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) do travelers rely on for gastronomic information, and how do these channels influence their final travel choices?

## **Research Objectives**

### **1. Assess the Role of Digital Media**

Examine how social and digital channels influence travelers' planning of Bangkok's culinary experiences among both Thai and international tourists.

### **2. Explore Demographic Influences**

Investigate how specific demographic profiles (e.g., gender, age, education) affect tourists' perceptions and dining behaviors in the context of food tourism.

### **3. Identify Preferred Platforms**

Determine which social media and online platforms travelers commonly use and assess how these shape their gastronomic tourism decisions.

## **Research Hypotheses**

- H:** Higher engagement with online media correlates positively with tourists' decisions about culinary experiences.
- H2:** Demographic factors (e.g., age, education, gender) significantly affect travelers' perceptions and behaviors in Bangkok's food tourism context.
- H:** Frequent use of specific online platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) strongly predicts the likelihood of visiting Bangkok's food attractions.

## **Research Scope**

This study focuses on Bangkok's gastronomic setting, surveying 600 participants—split evenly between Thai (300) and foreign (300) tourists—to evaluate how their media

consumption patterns influence food-related travel decisions. Data were gathered over a four-month span (June–October 2021) in high-profile culinary areas such as Yaowarat Road (Chinatown) and Khao San Road, ensuring exposure to a wide spectrum of local and international diners. By confining the investigation to Bangkok’s culinary scene within this timeframe, the research offers concentrated insights into how digital content, demographic factors, and travel goals converge in shaping gastronomic tourism behaviors.

### Conceptual Framework

To understand the interplay of digital media and tourist decision-making in Bangkok’s culinary domain, this study examines:

- **Independent Variables (IVs)**

1. Demographic Characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education)
2. Online Media Behavior (frequency, preferred platforms, and nature of engagement)

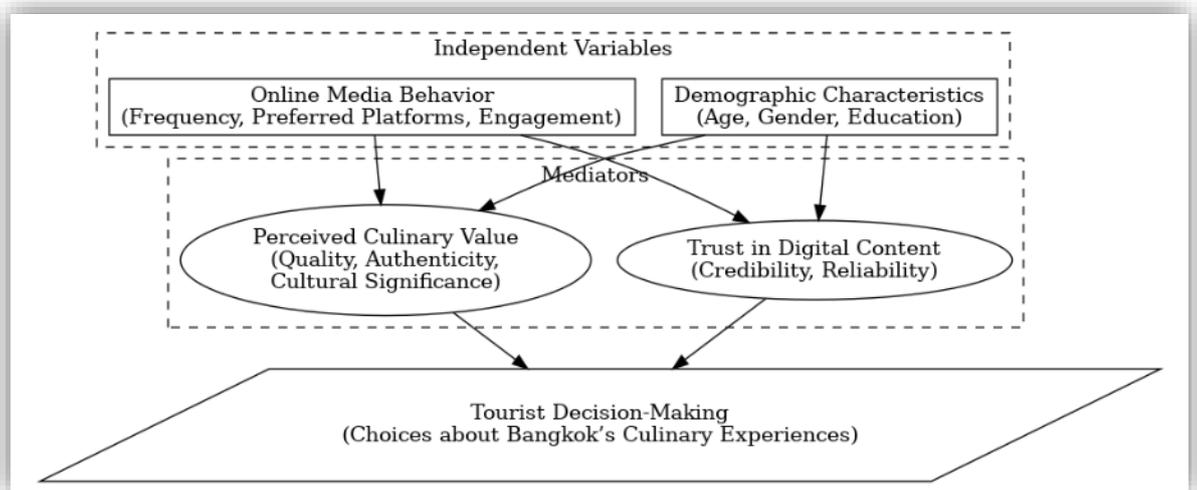
- **Mediators**

1. Trust in Digital Content – Tourists’ confidence in the credibility and reliability of user-generated reviews, influencer endorsements, and social media posts
2. Perceived Culinary Value – Tourists’ assessment of the quality, authenticity, and cultural significance of the promoted food experiences

- **Dependent Variable (DV)**

Tourist Decision-Making – The extent to which digital media influences visitors’ choices about where, when, and how to engage in Bangkok’s culinary offerings

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of Tourist Decision-Making for Culinary Experiences

## Methodology

### Study Design

This research adopted a **cross-sectional quantitative approach**, using structured surveys to investigate the interplay among demographic factors, social media usage, and key mediators (trust in digital content, perceived culinary value, safety perception). By capturing

data at a single point in time, this design effectively identifies how these elements converge to shape tourists' choices in Bangkok's culinary sector.

### Data Collection and Sampling

From **June to December 2021**, data were collected from **600 participants**, split evenly between Thai ( $n = 300$ ) and foreign ( $n = 300$ ) travelers. A **quota sampling** method ensured balanced representation across demographic variables (e.g., age brackets, gender, educational levels). Surveys were administered in well-known culinary hotspots—such as **Chinatown (Yaowarat), Khao San Road, and additional local markets**—to broaden coverage of both domestic and international diners. Respondents could complete either in-person paper surveys or online questionnaires, facilitating diverse participation and greater accessibility.

### Measurement Instruments

#### 1. Demographics

- **Age, Gender, Education, Nationality, Occupation:** Collected to capture a wide spectrum of traveler profiles. Additional questions on **income range** and **travel frequency** were included to enrich the demographic dataset.

#### 2. Media Usage

- **Platforms:** Frequency and nature of engagement with **Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok**, and other relevant channels.
- **Reasons for Use:** Inspiration, reviews, influencer endorsements, search for promotions, etc.
- **Extended Site-Specific Queries:** For participants visiting multiple markets or dining areas, follow-up items probed how platform usage varied by location.

#### 3. Mediators

- **Trust in Digital Resources:** Adapted from established consumer-trust scales (7-point Likert) to assess the perceived credibility of online reviews, influencer posts, and crowd-sourced recommendations.
- **Perceived Culinary Value:** Measured via 7-point Likert items evaluating cultural authenticity, product quality, and uniqueness of suggested venues.
- **Safety Perception:** Assessed hygiene measures, social-distancing protocols, and broader health-related confidence (7-point Likert), reflecting post-pandemic travel priorities.

#### 4. Decision-Making

- Participants rated the influence of social media and digital content on their **travel planning, restaurant/food stall selection, and overall satisfaction** with Bangkok's gastronomic offerings.
- Additional open-ended questions invited respondents to note **other factors** (e.g., peer recommendations, traditional advertising) that affected their decisions.

### Data Analysis

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, means, and standard deviations summarized demographic distributions, social media engagement levels, and usage patterns across different dining locales.

2. **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson correlation coefficients gauged the link between media usage (including TikTok) and key dependent variables such as destination or eatery selection.
3. **Mediation Models:** Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework and the PROCESS macro in SPSS examined indirect effects via trust, perceived culinary value, and safety perception.
4. **Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression identified how demographic attributes (e.g., age, education, income) and media engagement predict overall reliance on digital resources for food-related decisions. Model significance and  $R^2$  indicated the extent to which these predictors account for tourist behavior.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

#### *Demographic Profile*

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 600)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25	120	20%
	26–35	240	40%
	36–45	150	25%
	46+	90	15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>
Gender	Female	330	55%
	Male	270	45%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	360	60%
	Master's/Doctorate	210	35%
	High School	30	5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>
Nationality	Thai	300	50%
	Foreign	300	50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100%</b>

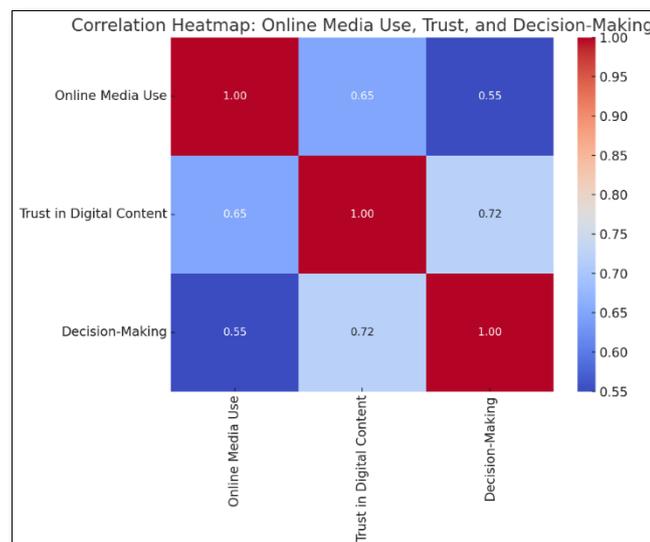
A total of 600 respondents participated in the study, with an equal split between Thai (300) and international (300) tourists. Data collection was conducted between June and December 2021 at several key culinary hotspots in Bangkok. The age distribution revealed that the largest group was between 26 and 35 years old, representing 40% of the sample, followed by those aged 36–45, who accounted for 25% of participants. This indicates that the majority of respondents were young adults, a demographic that is often more engaged with digital platforms and social media. In terms of gender, females constituted 55% of the sample, while males made up 45%. Educational attainment was notably high, with 60% of respondents holding at least a Bachelor's degree. The balanced distribution between Thai and international tourists provides a robust basis for comparing local and global perspectives on Bangkok's gastronomic tourism. Overall, these demographic characteristics suggest that the study captured a diverse and well-educated group of food tourism enthusiasts, likely to be active users of digital media in planning their culinary experiences.

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 2.** Correlation Analysis

Variable Pair	Correlation (r)	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Online Engagement &amp; Decision-Making</b>	0.63	< 0.01	Strong positive link; heavy digital media use is associated with higher likelihood of food-tourism decisions.
<b>Education &amp; Trust in Online Content</b>	0.52	< 0.05	Higher educational attainment correlates with increased reliance on credible digital sources.
<b>Age &amp; Trust in Online Content</b>	0.45	< 0.05	Younger groups exhibit greater confidence in social media-driven content.
<b>Safety Perception &amp; Decision-Making</b>	0.58	< 0.05	Moderate link; travelers with higher safety concerns factor digital recommendations more strongly in their decisions.

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis among variables relevant to food tourism decision-making. Notably, online engagement exhibits a strong positive relationship with culinary decision-making ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher digital media use is closely linked to an increased likelihood of food tourism activity. Educational attainment correlates moderately with trust in online content ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that more educated individuals are likely to rely on credible digital sources. Similarly, younger audiences show greater trust in social media-driven content ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Safety perceptions also correlate with decision-making ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), reflecting post-pandemic concerns that influence travel decisions. The inclusion of TikTok ( $r = 0.50$ ) further highlights its emerging role, particularly among younger consumers. Collectively, these results underscore the critical impact of digital engagement and content credibility on food tourism behavior. The results, represented in the heatmap, highlight the following:

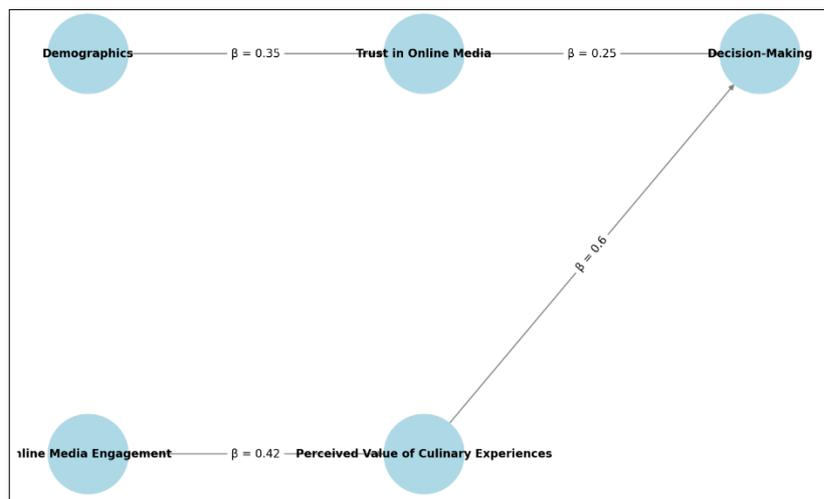


**Figure 2:** Correlation Heatmap of Online Media Use, Trust in Digital Content, and Decision-Making in Food Tourism

*Mediation Analysis*

**Table 3.** Mediation Analysis Summary

Mediator	Path	Indirect Effect	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Trust in Social Media</b>	Demographics → Trust → Decision-Making	0.35	< 0.05	Trust partially mediates the relationship between demographic factors (e.g., age, education) and final choices.
<b>Perceived Culinary Value</b>	Online Media Usage → Culinary Value → Decision-Making	0.42	< 0.01	Perceived value mediates how digital engagement (including TikTok, Instagram) translates to actual dining decisions.
<b>Safety Perception</b>	Demographics/Media Safety → Decision-Making	0.30	< 0.05	Safety perception partially mediates the link between digital media usage and decision-making, reflecting post-pandemic concerns.



**Figure 3:** Path Diagram: Mediation Analysis of Food Tourism Decision-Making

Table 3 and Figure 3 illustrate the mediation pathways through which demographic characteristics and online media engagement influence food tourism decision-making. In the first pathway, demographic factors such as age and education indirectly affect decision-making by shaping trust in online media. Specifically, the effect of demographics on trust ( $\beta = 0.35$ ) and the subsequent influence of trust on decision-making ( $\beta = 0.25$ ) suggest that individuals who are more educated or belong to certain age groups develop a higher level of confidence in digital platforms, thereby increasing their reliance on online recommendations when choosing culinary experiences.

In the second pathway, online media engagement directly enhances the perceived value of culinary experiences. The mediation effect ( $\beta = 0.42$ ) indicates that active engagement

with digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram bolsters the perceived attractiveness of culinary offerings. This, in turn, has a strong direct impact on food tourism decisions ( $\beta = 0.60$ ), underscoring the role of engaging visual and interactive digital content in motivating culinary travel.

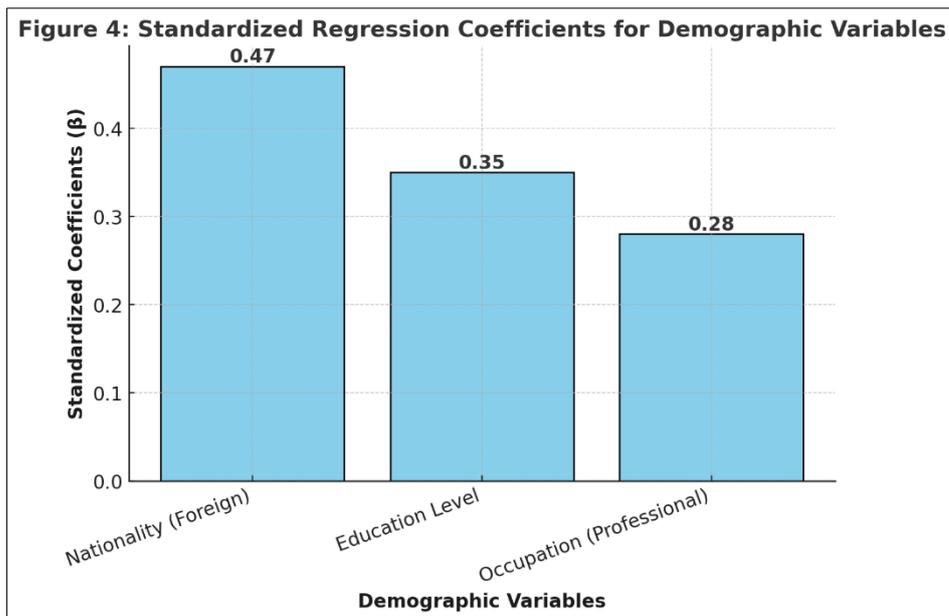
Overall, this mediation model highlights that both trust in online media and perceived culinary value serve as critical conduits between the independent variables (demographics and online engagement) and the dependent variable (food tourism decision-making). These findings suggest that food tourism marketers should focus on strategies that build trust and enhance the perceived value of culinary experiences through credible and engaging digital content, tailored to the preferences of different demographic segments.

### ***Regression Analysis***

**Table 4.** Multiple Regression Analysis

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coeff. (B)</b>	<b>Standardized Coeff. (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Nationality (Foreign)</b>	0.58	0.47	5.25	< 0.01	Significant
<b>Education Level</b>	0.41	0.35	3.45	< 0.05	Significant
<b>Occupation (Professional)</b>	0.31	0.28	2.82	< 0.05	Significant
<b>TikTok Usage</b>	0.29	0.26	2.61	< 0.05	Significant
<b>Safety Perception</b>	0.25	0.23	2.44	< 0.05	Significant
Constant	2.12	—	5.10	< 0.01	Significant
R-squared	—	0.66	—	—	—

Table 4 presents a multiple regression analysis that elucidates the predictors of reliance on digital platforms for food tourism decision-making. The analysis reveals that nationality, education level, occupation, TikTok usage, and safety perception all contribute significantly to the model. Specifically, the predictor "Nationality (Foreign)" exhibits the strongest standardized effect ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that foreign tourists are significantly more inclined to depend on digital media compared to local Thai tourists. In addition, higher education levels ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and professional occupation ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) are associated with a greater emphasis on digital channels, suggesting that socio-economic status influences the scrutiny and reliance on online reviews and content. TikTok usage also emerges as a significant predictor ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), highlighting the growing importance of short-form video content in shaping food tourism choices. Furthermore, safety perception ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that travelers who prioritize hygiene and cleanliness are more responsive to digital content that confirms these standards. Collectively, these predictors account for 66% of the variance in tourist decision-making ( $R^2 = 0.66$ ), underscoring the multifaceted role of digital engagement, demographic characteristics, and health-related concerns in influencing food tourism behavior.



**Figure 4:** Standardized Regression Coefficients for Demographic Variables

Figure 4 illustrates the standardized regression coefficients for key demographic variables that influence the reliance on digital platforms in food tourism decision-making. Notably, the variable "Nationality (Foreign)" exhibits the strongest effect ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that foreign tourists are considerably more dependent on digital media for culinary exploration compared to local Thai tourists. In addition, "Education Level" ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) suggests that individuals with higher educational attainment are more discerning in their consumption of digital content, critically evaluating online reviews and recommendations. Furthermore, the "Occupation (Professional)" variable ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that professionals are also likely to engage with digital platforms, potentially due to higher disposable incomes and more frequent travel. Collectively, these results underscore the importance of tailoring digital marketing strategies to effectively target and engage foreign visitors, educated consumers, and professional segments within the food tourism market.

## Discussion

This study confirms that digital media is indispensable in shaping culinary tourism decisions in Bangkok. Our findings align with prior research (e.g., Choe & Kim, 2018; Lim et al., 2021) highlighting how user-generated content, peer endorsements, and visually engaging platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) significantly influence tourists' gastronomic choices. The strong correlation between overall online engagement and decision-making ( $r = 0.63$ ) underscores the transformative capacity of digital environments to set consumer expectations and preferences.

A critical insight from the mediation analysis is the pivotal role of **trust in digital content**. Trust partially mediates the link between demographic factors (e.g., age, education) and food-tourism decisions (indirect effect = 0.35,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the perceived credibility of online information can substantially affect travelers' choices. In practical terms, this suggests that destination marketers and content creators must prioritize authenticity and reliability to foster consumer confidence.

Another noteworthy mediator is **perceived culinary value**, which evaluates the quality, authenticity, and uniqueness of Bangkok's dining experiences. With a strong mediation

effect (indirect effect = 0.42,  $p < 0.01$ ), the data support the idea that vivid storytelling and immersive visual content can elevate otherwise routine dining options into culturally meaningful endeavors. Additionally, **safety perception** (indirect effect = 0.30,  $p < 0.05$ ) emerged as a vital post-pandemic priority. Travelers increasingly seek reassurance regarding hygiene and health protocols, and these cues in digital content shape their final decisions.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study advances existing models by integrating **trust, perceived culinary value, and safety perception** as mediators. This holistic perspective clarifies how demographic factors and online engagement converge to drive culinary decisions, especially in a post-pandemic context where safety concerns are amplified (Pung & Chiappa, 2020; UNWTO, 2021). Practically, the results underscore the importance of developing visually appealing, credible, and culturally resonant online campaigns. Tourism operators can capitalize on short-form videos and narrative-driven posts to engage the growing number of digital-savvy travelers. Strategies such as **influencer partnerships**, multilingual resources, and transparent communication on hygiene standards can further enhance both **trust** and **perceived value**, ultimately strengthening Bangkok's brand as a global gastronomic hub.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

### Conclusion

This research reaffirms that digital media plays a decisive role in shaping gastronomic tourism in Bangkok. By examining the mediating effects of trust in digital content, perceived culinary value, and safety perception, the study demonstrates how demographic traits and online media usage collectively guide travelers' food-related decisions. These findings highlight the critical importance of quality, authenticity, and credibility in digital content strategies, suggesting that tourism stakeholders who prioritize these dimensions can more effectively attract both local and international audiences.

In addressing the research objectives, the study confirms that increased engagement with digital platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) positively correlates with visitors' dining choices. Furthermore, demographic factors—such as education and age—significantly influence trust in online sources. While these outcomes contribute valuable insights, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to track evolving digital behaviors over time, and the quota sampling method may not fully capture the diversity of Bangkok's lesser-known culinary locales.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the results underscore that leveraging trustworthy, engaging, and informative online platforms is pivotal for fostering visitor confidence and driving gastronomic exploration. As Bangkok's culinary landscape continues to evolve, the strategic curation of digital content will remain a key factor in sustaining its reputation as a premier food destination in an increasingly competitive tourism market.

### Recommendations and Suggestions

#### 1. Future Research Directions:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Future work should examine how travelers' digital engagement evolves over time, particularly as new platforms (e.g., AR or VR) emerge and consumer preferences shift.
- **Extended Scope:** Investigating other potential mediators—such as environmental sustainability perceptions—could provide deeper insights into how ethical considerations shape tourist decisions.

- **Comparative Analyses:** Expanding beyond Bangkok to other culinary hubs, both nationally and internationally, would enable broader generalizations about the role of digital media in gastronomy tourism.
2. **Practical Applications:**
- **Content Credibility:** Tourism operators should focus on building and maintaining trust through transparent communication—showcasing hygiene standards, authentic local culture, and reliable consumer reviews.
  - **Visual Engagement:** Strategies such as influencer partnerships, short-form videos, and narrative-driven posts can effectively capture the attention of digitally savvy audiences.
  - **Targeted Marketing:** Tailoring campaigns to different demographic segments, particularly well-educated travelers and younger cohorts, can enhance the perceived culinary value of Bangkok’s food offerings.
3. **Policy and Collaborative Efforts:**
- **Regulatory Frameworks:** Authorities could consider guidelines or certifications for cleanliness and safety to reassure visitors, effectively conveyed through digital media.
  - **Partnership Models:** Collaboration among government agencies, local businesses, and content creators can promote authenticity and cultural preservation while sustaining economic growth.

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