

Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Intentions for Culinary Tourism: The RED Platform Study

Weiming Wang

*Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
weiming@graduate.utm.my*

Noorminshah A. Iahad

*Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
minshah@utm.my*

Abstract – This study investigates the expanding culinary tourism sector in China, driven by a leisure-oriented consumer market. It focuses on the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) through reviews on RED, a widely-used Chinese social media platform rich in user-generated content. The research explores how RED's reviews shape food choices in culinary tourism, guided by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). A proposed model examines the relationship between these reviews and consumer visit intentions, highlighting the strategic application of e-WOM on platforms like RED to influence culinary tourism behavior. The findings emphasize the importance of effectively utilizing social media feedback in this evolving market.

Keywords: social media reviews, online reviews, culinary tourism, food tourism, RED

1. Background

In 2023, as China's food tourism rebounds, this study examines RED, a key Chinese social media platform, and its impact on culinary visit intentions. It explores how RED's user-generated content influences restaurant choices, shedding light on e-WOM's role in China's dynamic food tourism sector.

2. Problem Background and Research Gap

China's post-pandemic food tourism is poised for growth, with the impact of e-WOM on platforms like RED crucial yet under-explored, despite China's substantial online user base [1]. This study aims to bridge the gap in understanding e-WOM's influence on food tourism choices in the digital era [2].

3. Research Questions and Research Objectives

The study addresses the following research questions:

- What is the influence of e-WOM on RED on food tourists' visit intentions in China?
- How do different forms of user-generated content on RED shape culinary tourism behaviors?
- What is the correlation between social media reviews on RED and tourists' food choice behaviors?

The objectives are:

- Investigate the impact of various factors (content quality, entertainment, etc.) on user attitude towards culinary choices.
- Analyze how user attitude influences visit intention in the context of food tourism.
- Examine the mediating role of food involvement between attitude and visit intention.

By exploring these aspects, the study aims to deepen the understanding of e-WOM's role in shaping food tourism in China's evolving digital landscape.

4. Underlying Theory

This study employs the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to examine consumer reactions to e-WOM in culinary tourism. The S-O-R model illustrates how stimuli like social media reviews trigger cognitive and emotional responses [3][4], while the ELM clarifies two persuasion paths: critical content evaluation (central route) and cues-based responses (peripheral route) [5]. This integration is vital in today's digital landscape, where consumer behavior is

influenced by both content and engagement [6][7], especially on platforms like RED, offering insights for effective marketing strategy development.

5. Method

The research, shown in Figure 1, progresses through seven phases, each building on the last. This structure ensures all activities, tools, and methods align with the study's objectives and questions.

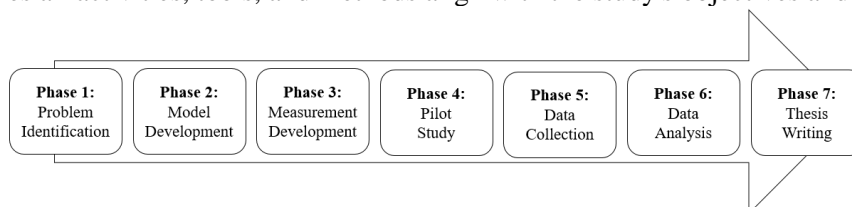


Figure 1: Research Methodology

6. Conclusion

From the theoretical and empirical foundations of the previous sections, this section develops a conceptual framework as shown in Figure 2.

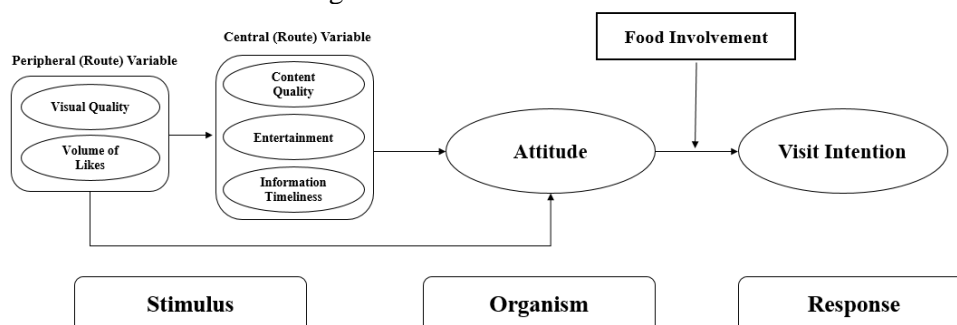


Figure 2: Conceptual model

This research examines e-WOM's influence in food marketing, emphasizing RED's impact on purchase intentions and the role of food involvement in consumer responses. It introduces a novel theoretical construct within the S-O-R framework and suggests future studies employ thorough data analysis for deeper insights.

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