

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE RELATED TO FOOD AND BEVERAGES: AN INVESTIGATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BANGKOK AND METROPOLITAN AREA

Pitipat Suwannapinunt
Krittaporn Sitthikraiwong
Punchanid Nimitsukcharoen
Sakdituch Dollayanukloh
Tossanate Puttiphapaibool
Nattharika Rittippant

School of Management Technology,
Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology, Thammasat University,
Pathum Thani, 12000, THAILAND
+662-501-3505, Email: natthari@siit.tu.ac.th

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the behavior of social media usage of users in Thailand. In particular, we focused on the influence of consumers' sharing restaurant and café location and/or food and beverage pictures. Survey respondents are college students in Bangkok and Metropolitan area that use Facebook and/or Instagram. We collect information which includes demographic data, general usage of social media, social media behavior, and their usage of Facebook and Instagram to post about food and beverages.

Keywords: Food and Beverage, Facebook, Instagram, Social Media, College Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media enable customers to communicate or share their experience through their network by using picture and video. The social network is a web service provider that use internet such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, etc. Among the top social media websites, Facebook is the most popular with the highest number of registered users worldwide (The Nielsen Company, 2012). In the US, Facebook has about 665 million active users, whereas Instagram currently has only 140 million (The Nielsen Company, 2012). Millions of Facebook users also use mobile phones to access their Facebook account, which yield approximately 30% of Facebook's advertisement revenues (The Nielsen Company, 2012). Users can enjoy a wide range of activities available on Facebook, for instance, they can play games and chat with friends. Smartphone applications also make it easier for users to access their social media account anywhere.

Social media has transformed the online advertisement through the use of video clips,

interactive flash games, Advergames, eBooks, images, and text messages, etc. Moreover, social media also enables viral marketing (i.e., word-of-mouth marketing) to spread online at a much faster speed. Many users tend to believe in the viral marketing much more than paid advertisements. This is due to the fact that actual users often share their product and/or brand experience on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram.

For these reasons, we are interested in investigating Facebook users' behavior, especially regarding their behavior of sharing posts related to restaurants, foods, or drinks. Furthermore, we are interested in comparing users' behavior on Facebook and Instagram which also has a wide range of activities, such as picture and video sharing, and location check-in functions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media

2.1.1 Definition of Social Media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as the "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." Pustylnick (2011) categorizes social network sites (SNS) into Pure Social Networks (Facebook), Grouped Social Networks (LinkedIn), Content Social Networks (Flickr), and Broadcast Social Networks (Twitter). Social media has become a significant force in consumer decision making, including such areas as increasing awareness, sharing information, forming opinions and attitudes, purchasing, and evaluating post purchase experience. In the past few years, social media have become the most famous communication channels for college-aged Internet users (Pelling and White, 2009).

2.2 Facebook

Among the various applications and platforms, Facebook has emerged as the primary "hang outs" for young users. Similar to other SNS, Facebook is a Web-based service that allows people to build public profiles and establishes connections with others in their social network (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In a more recent study, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2011) found that engaging in social information-seeking behaviors on Facebook (e.g., to learn more about people with whom the user has an offline connection) was related to increased social capital, while using Facebook to maintain close ties and to meet strangers without any previous offline connection were not. Facebook groups are the most popular and widespread application that encourages the forms of social collaboration and generates discussions based on common interests (Casteleyn, Mottart, and Rutten, 2009; Park, Kee, and Valenzuela, 2009). As many users are increasingly participating in Facebook groups to find the trusted sources of information and opinions, there is an opportunity for Facebook to build consumer-brand relationships and viral marketing platforms.

2.3 Viral Marketing of Facebook

The purpose of viral marketing is the creation of ‘buzz’ for a brand or a product. Viral marketing is becoming increasingly important for companies. With the evolution of social media, viral advertising also has gained more popularity; online social platforms dramatically have changed the way consumers respond to advertising (Marken, 2007). Social media such as Facebook allow target consumers to become message senders by passing on ads to friends, connecting them to the advertisers directly, or commenting on the ad and having those comments passed along in viral channels (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009). Positive advertising responses indicate the power of using Facebook groups as a platform for viral marketing. When members of the group spread out viral marketing to other friends, they become endorsers in that brand's Facebook ads and thus increase friends' likelihood to pass down the ads.

2.4 Instagram

Another popular social networking application is an Instagram which is a free application for smartphones. It is a platform for sharing photos with other users. Photos can be taken directly with the application, or uploaded existing photos from the photo library of the smartphones. One of the most unique features is the fact that the photo can be modified using Instagram's tools (e.g., cropped photos, choose filtering before uploading the photos). There is also the possibility to upload or link the photos to other social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and other applications. On Instagram, users can ‘like’ each others’ photos and comment on them and follow the profiles of other users. Instagram's success has also attracted brands’ interest to the social network. Brands used Instagram in many ways. Thus, it is important to investigate how brands utilize Instagram and the effects on user engagement.

2.5 Viral Marketing of Instagram

The use of user-generated content can also cause a photo to generate buzz on Instagram. The brand should use influence marketing to obtain more followers on Instagram and that brands should use to gain more followers on Instagram, and encourage more brand interaction. On Instagram, it is also possible to see photos of other users. By adding brand related hash tags (#) to a photo, a photo is seen by many Instagram users and generates electronic word-of-mouth viral marketing. Another way a brand generates a chance of viral marketing is by sharing Instagram content on other social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. It is expected that adding the possibility for a photo to generate buzz, leads to obtain more followers and likes.

3. METHODOLOGY

We conducted a questionnaire survey to investigate social media behaviors of college students in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. The survey included questions about social media usage, devices used to access social networks, Instagram and Facebook behaviors and usage. Usable survey results were obtained from 302 college students between ages 18 to 34 in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. The first part of the survey asked about the personal information such as gender, ages, and income per month. The second part of the survey asked about users' general usage of social media such as frequency and purpose. We also asked about behavior of customers toward their taste and preferences for food and restaurants. Moreover, Likert-scale items were used to measure respondents' Instagram and Facebook behaviors.

4. RESULTS

The summary of respondents' demographic information is summarized in Table 1. There were 198 female respondents and 104 male respondents. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of registered accounts of major social media. Facebook has 97.40%. Line ranked second with 93.70% and Instagram has 74.80%. In Figure 2, the most preferred social media is Facebook (51.30%), Line is still the second rank (40.10%), and Instagram ranked third with 6%. Figure 3 showed how respondents access their social media accounts. Mobile phone is the most popular tool with 91.40%. Notebook ranked second with 51% and personal computer ranked third with 36.40%.

Table 1: Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	104	34.40%
Female	198	65.60%
Total	302	100.00%

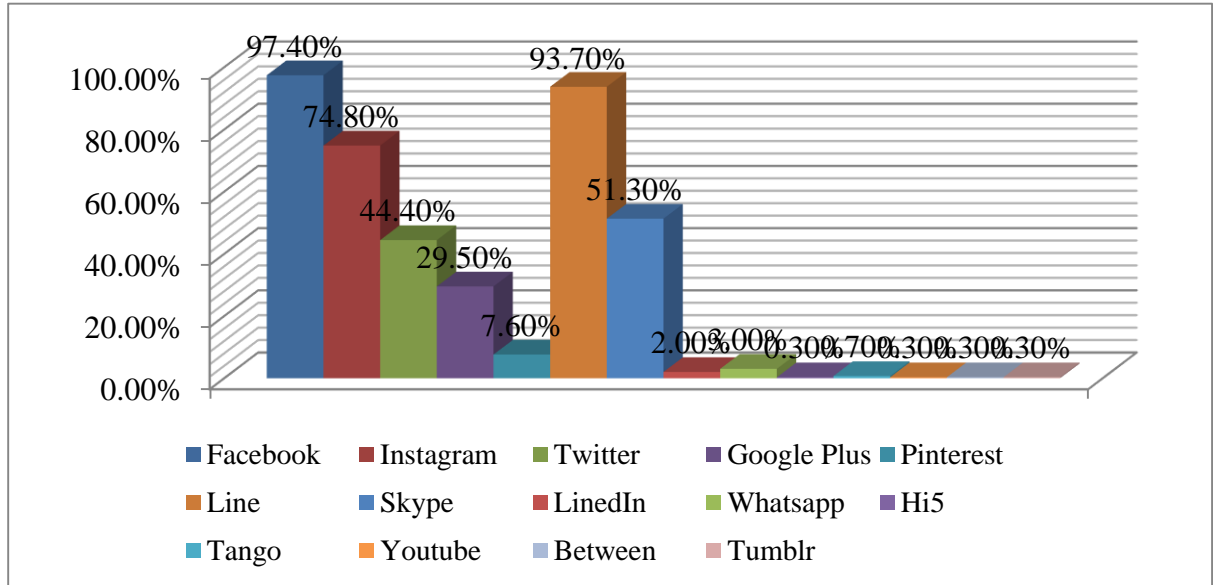


Figure 1: The summation of social media usage

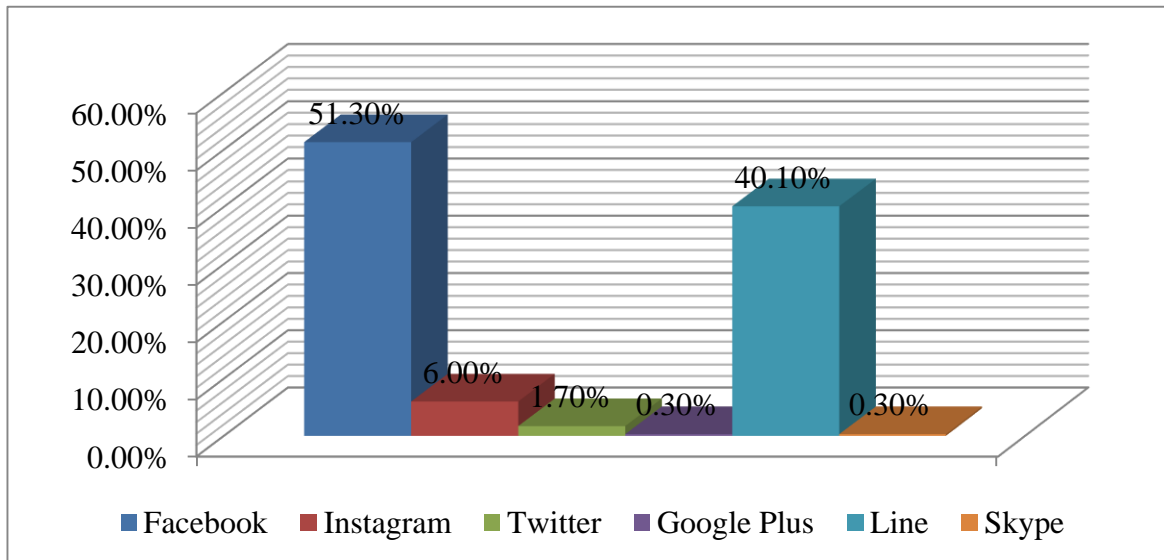


Figure 2: The most social media usage

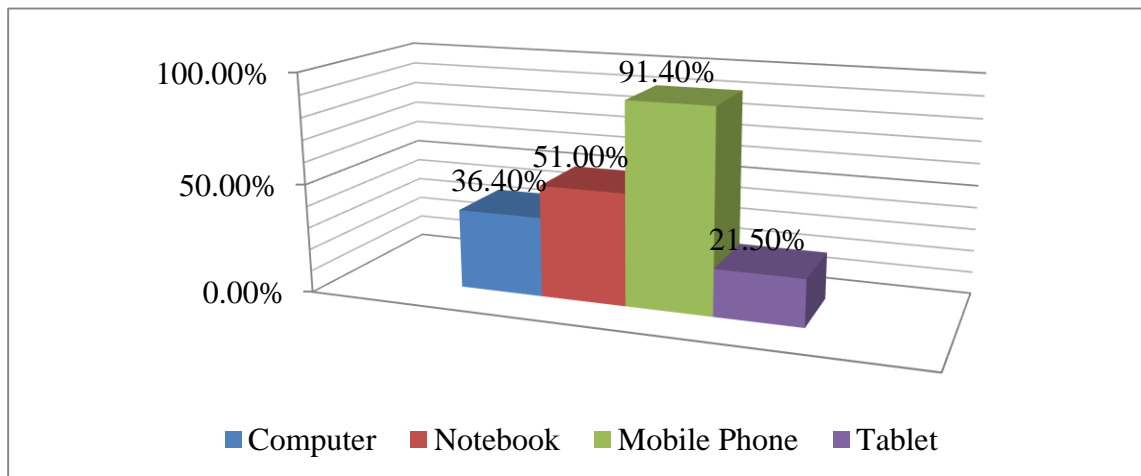


Figure 3: The most tool usage

Table 2 showed the frequency and behavior of social media usage. Out of the 302 respondents, 121 respondents (21%) said that they started to use social media because they wanted to be in trend. The majority of respondents (193 respondents, 63.50%) used social media to share like and to check-in from several travel places.

Table 2: Social Media Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Source		
Website	80	13.9%
Newspaper	0	0.00%
Magazine	3	0.50%
Trend	121	21.0%
Friends	95	16.50%
Etc.	2	0.40%
Place		
Department Store	138	45.40%
Workplace	34	11.20%
Restaurant	158	52.00%
Coffee Shop	86	28.30%
Bakery Shop	84	27.60%
Home	101	33.20%
Movies Theater	80	26.30%
School/ University	137	45.10%
Travel Places	193	63.50%
Etc.	13	4.30%

Table 3 showed information about respondents' Facebook usage. There were 294 respondents that have a Facebook account (97.40%). The main reason of using Facebook is to contact with others (236 respondents, 78.10%). Most of the respondents follow their friends (260 people, 86.10%). People that they follow post pictures of food and restaurant everyday (104 respondents, 34.40%). People that they follow mostly posted about Japanese food (174 respondents, 57.60%). The majority of respondents post pictures of Japanese food (104 respondents, 34.40%). Several respondents (94 of them or 31.10%) post pictures of restaurants in shopping malls. The number one reason why most respondents are posting food and restaurant pictures is to persuade others to click like (113 respondents, 37.40%).

Table 3: Facebook Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Use	294	97.40%
Reasons for using:		
Post food picture	132	43.70%
Contact with others	236	78.10%
Find new friends	69	22.80%
Update status	171	56.60%
Invite others to join with group	27	8.90%
Invite others to buy products and services	22	7.30%
Look for dates	16	5.3%
Search information	124	41.1%
Follow celebrities	110	36.40%
Follow the brands	86	28.50%
Invite others to participate in an event	18	6.00%
Participate in an online group	47	15.60%
Etc.	2	0.70%
People that respondents follow:		
Friends	260	86.10%
Family	125	41.40%
Net idol	59	19.50%
Actors/Celebrities	100	33.10%
Etc.	8	2.50%
Behavior of people that respondents follow:		
1. Food types		
Thai	141	46.70%
Japanese	174	57.60%
Vietnamese	17	5.60%
American and European	112	37.10%
Korean	59	19.50%
Chinese	33	10.90%
Coffee or drinks	101	33.40%
Desserts	162	53.60%
Etc.	1	0.30%
2. Restaurant types		
Coffee shop	125	41.40%
Hotel	98	32.50%
Buffet	98	32.50%

Department store	127	42.10%
Normal restaurant	126	41.70%
Pub/Bar	59	19.50%
Bakery	1	0.30%
Etc.	1	0.30%
Personal preferences for food and restaurants:		
1. Food types		
Thai	82	27.20%
Japanese	104	34.40%
Vietnamese	19	6.30%
American and European	65	21.50%
Korean	35	11.60%
Chinese	25	8.30%
Coffee or drinks	59	19.50%
Desserts	94	31.10%
Etc.	4	1.40%
2. Restaurant types		
Coffee shop	79	26.20%
Hotel	58	19.20%
Buffet	68	22.50%
Department store	94	31.10%
Normal restaurant	88	29.10%
Pub/Bar	28	9.30%
Bakery	2	0.70%
Etc.	2	0.70%
Reasons of posting pictures:		
Like	113	37.40%
Comment	70	23.20%
Want others to follow the restaurant	95	31.50%
To increase the number of followers	26	8.60%
Etc.	15	5.00%
Why respondents click "Like":		
Want to participate	98	32.50%
Like the picture or information	255	84.40%
Follow others	41	13.60%
Etc.	5	1.60%
Why respondents share picture:		
Like the information	241	79.80%

Share	31	10.30%
Want others to click “Like”	45	14.90%
To increase the number of followers	15	5.00%
Etc.	22	7.30%

Table 4 showed that 294 respondents (97.40%) have an Instagram account. The most reason that several respondents use Instagram is to post pictures of food with frequency of 144 respondents or 47.70%. Most respondents (212 people or 70.20%) followed their friends. The people whom 85 of our respondents follow post food and restaurant pictures every day. The people whom 150 of our respondents follow post cake pictures and the most posted place is coffee shop (111 respondents or 36.80%). Several respondents (88 respondents or 29.10%) post pictures of restaurants in department stores. The highest reason why most respondents are posting food and restaurant pictures is to persuade others to click like (105 respondents or 34.80%).

Table 4: Instagram Information

	Frequency	Percentage
Use	294	97.40%
Reasons for using:		
Post food pictures	144	47.70%
Contact others	103	34.10%
Find new friends	41	13.60%
Update status	124	41.10%
Invite others to join	11	3.60%
Invite others to buy products and services	17	5.60%
Look for dates	6	2.00%
Search information	44	14.60%
Follow celebrities	105	34.80%
Follow the brands	53	17.50%
Invite others to participate in an event	7	2.30%
Participate in online group	9	3.00%
Etc.	2	0.70%
People that respondents follow:		
Friends	212	70.20%
Family	101	33.40%
Net idol	59	19.50%
Actors/Celebrities	154	51.00%
Etc.	4	1.30%
Behavior of people that respondents follow:		
1. Food types		
Thai	120	39.70%
Japanese	146	48.30%
Vietnamese	27	8.90%
American and European	119	39.40%
Korean	69	22.80%
Chinese	43	14.20%
Coffee or drinks	100	33.10%
Desserts	150	49.70%
2. Restaurant types		
Coffee Shop	111	36.80%
Hotel	99	32.80%
Buffet	81	26.80%
Department Store	110	36.40%

Normal restaurant	104	34.40%
Pub/ Bar	61	20.20%
Personal preferences for food and restaurants:		
1. Food types		
Thai	81	26.80%
Japanese	94	31.10%
Vietnamese	16	5.30%
American and European	67	22.20%
Korean	34	11.30%
Chinese	28	9.30%
Coffee or drinks	61	20.20%
Desserts	93	30.80%
2. Restaurant types		
Coffee Shop	76	25.20%
Hotel	46	15.20%
Buffet	66	21.90%
Department Store	88	29.10%
Normal restaurant	93	30.80%
Pub/Bar	29	9.60%
Reasons of posting pictures:		
Like	105	34.80%
Comment	71	23.50%
Want others to follow the restaurant	85	28.10%
Post to increase the follower	29	9.60%
Etc.	9	3.00%
Why respondents click "Like":		
Want to participate	79	26.20%
Like the picture or information	193	63.90%
Follow others	29	9.60%
Etc.	2	0.60%

Table 5: Eating Behavior

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I always dine in restaurant	0.66%	23.18%	43.71%	22.85%	8.94%
2. I don't like to eat the same food and always want to try the new thing	3.31%	18.54%	36.42%	22.85%	15.89%
3. I always go to my favorite restaurant every week	7.28%	32.78%	34.11%	25.50%	7.28%
4. When new restaurant open I always try it	4.64%	28.48%	32.78%	17.88%	9.27%
5. When I find my new favorite restaurant I always share with my friends	3.31%	10.26%	30.13%	35.43%	20.53%
6. I always focus on the taste of the food	2.65%	11.26%	28.15%	34.77%	22.85%

Table 6: Facebook Behavior about Foods and Beverages

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I always click "Like" on my friends' new post	5.78%	21.43%	37.41%	26.53%	8.84%
2. I always comment on my friends' picture	25.17%	34.35%	29.25%	9.86%	1.36%
3. When my friends post picture, I am always interested in it	11.22%	18.71%	36.73%	29.25%	4.42%
4. I always go to restaurant that my friends post	25.17%	36.73%	24.83%	10.54%	2.72%
5. I read my friends' timeline, but never post anything	13.61%	20.41%	32.99%	23.81%	9.18%
6. My friends always click "like" on my picture	18.03%	22.79%	37.76%	17.69%	3.74%
7. My friends always comment on my picture	20.75%	28.23%	38.10%	11.22%	1.70%
8. I always click "like" on my own picture	35.71%	22.11%	25.85%	11.90%	4.08%
9. I always comment on my own picture	32.65%	31.29%	24.49%	8.50%	2.72%
10. When I post picture, I always check-in	23.13%	22.11%	30.61%	17.01%	6.80%
11. When I post picture, I always tag	24.83%	22.45%	30.95%	15.31%	6.80%
12. I always upload video	50.00%	18.03%	20.07%	9.52%	2.04%
13. When I post picture, I get more follower	34.69%	26.53%	26.19%	10.54%	1.70%
14. When others have event picture, I always participate in the event	42.52%	22.45%	24.15%	8.50%	2.04%

15. I always follow Fanpage pictures	29.59%	24.83%	27.89%	12.59%	4.76%
16. When I see Fanpage, I always share to my friends.	41.84%	20.41%	23.47%	10.88%	3.06%

Table 7: Instagram Behavior about Foods and Beverages

	Never	Sometime	Often	Always	Usually
1. I always click “Like” when my friends post	4.00%	16.89%	39.56%	25.78%	13.78%
2. I always comment on my friends’ picture	21.33%	33.78%	30.67%	12.44%	1.78%
3. I always go to restaurants that my friends post	23.11%	32.44%	28.89%	12.44%	3.11%
4. When my friends post picture, I am always interested in it	6.67%	22.22%	43.56%	21.33%	6.22%
5. My friends always click “like” on my picture	14.22%	20.00%	40.44%	18.67%	6.67%
6. My friends always comment on my picture	16.44%	30.67%	37.33%	12.00%	3.11%
7. Before posting picture, I always retouch my picture	13.78%	17.33%	35.56%	14.22%	18.67%
8. I always click “like” on my own picture	23.11%	17.78%	29.78%	19.11%	9.78%
9. I always comment on my own picture	23.11%	27.56%	34.67%	12.44%	1.78%
10. I always upload video	41.78%	17.33%	27.56%	8.89%	4.44%
11. When I post picture I always link my picture to another social media.	24.00%	20.00%	34.22%	16.00%	5.78%

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, many businesses are able to use social media such as Facebook and Instagram for their business purposes or for branding. Based on our results about respondents’ Facebook behaviors respondent prefer to post mostly at Japanese restaurant and bakery. Respondents also prefer to share the pictures or contents because they want their friends on social media to click like and follow to the same restaurant. In term of food behaviors, the respondents prefer to share their new favorite restaurant with their friends, tend to be very interested when their friends post the pictures about foods and drinks, and always go to the same restaurant that their friends posted. In terms of eating behaviors, our respondents prefer to go to the new restaurant that has just opened. Based on our results on Instagram behaviors, the respondents indicated they mostly prefer to post the pictures of Japanese food and desserts. The purposes of posting the pictures are that respondents want their friends to click like and follow to the restaurant. In term of posting pictures, most people are interested in pictures

about foods or drinks that their friends have posted.

We acknowledge limitations of this study. Since this is a preliminary study to obtain frequencies about food behaviors, our results have yet to be statistically analyzed. In the future research, we are planning to expand to our study to further analyze these behaviors as well as expand our sample to include different demographics. Our goal is to analyze more in depth about food behavior relating to social media usage. In addition, the study could be expanded to include other types of businesses.

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