Chapter 17
An Exploratory Study on the Role of Websites in Gastronomy Museum Dialogic Communication

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ABSTRACT

Rooted in the dialogic communication model, the main objective of this study is to analyse the interactivity level of websites of gastronomy museums in Turkey. Thus, it will be unearthed whether gastronomy museums are progressing towards more dialogic or are staying informative systems with the relationship with their target audience. Via content analysis on websites, two questions were sought: (1) What kind of tools are utilized to present information? (2) What tools or resources are utilized on websites to interact with virtual visitors? The data were analysed by comparing private and public museums. The results indicate that the websites of gastronomy museums in Turkey have a medium level of interaction in presenting information and a low level of interaction in the tools available to virtual visitors. And thus, it can be said that museums use their websites for one-way communication, which are not fit for dialogic communication. This is valid for both private and public museums. Managerial implications were discussed, and future research directions are presented.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become not only an indispensable means of our life at present but also an integral part of our culture and has a significant impact on our lifestyle. The said impacts have changed the ways of communication, such as the means, form, and time of communication that people establish with each other and with organizations and the number of tools serving for this purpose have increased. The websites have a significant place among these tools.

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The websites were considered as a tool providing one-way information (Web 1.0) to its users in the beginning stages of their emergence. Today, Web 2.0 technologies provide the opportunity to establish symmetrical, bidirectional, and interactive communication between its users and the organizations. In this context, websites have become one of the most necessary tools for organizations to communicate dialogically with their target audiences.

During recent years, museums have received their share of such changes (Camarero et al., 2016) and began to change their communication channels and models to effectively respond to ongoing dynamic, social, and technological progress and increase visitor engagement (Najda-Janoszka & Sawczuk, 2021). The relationship between the museums and their visitors has become more participatory and interactive through the ability of the museums to access many tools such as video channels, blogs, podcasts, social media sites, tags, forums, especially with the development of Web 2.0 technologies (Capriotti & Pardo Kuklinski, 2012; López et al., 2010). In this context, dialogic communication has gained an important position in terms of online communication strategy in museums as in entire organizations at present (Capriotti et al., 2016).

Interestingly, when the studies examining the position of museums in terms of dialogic communication are reviewed (Capriotti et al., 2016; Capriotti & Pardo Kuklinski, 2012; Lopatovska, 2015; Pallas & Economides, 2008), it has been observed that gastronomy museums have not been addressed as the research subject in the studies. In the studies conducted concerning gastronomy museums, it is seen that the issues such as the impact of such museums on tourist motivation (Kim et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020) or the number of various characteristics of gastronomy museums in a particular country [e.g., Turkey (Akyürek & Erdem, 2019); Italy (Garibaldi & Pozzi, 2021)] are prevalently discussed.

Considering this limitation, the overall purpose of the study is to analyse the degree of interactivity applied on the websites of gastronomy museums and to evaluate whether these digital platforms have become more interactive.

INTERACTIVITY AND DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION

In the early stages of the Internet (Web 1.0), users had the opportunity to statically view and read the content on the webpage without any interaction (like, comment, answers, etc.) with the page content (Handsfield et al., 2009). Therefore, solely one-way communication from organizations to users was concerned (Capriotti & Pardo Kuklinski, 2012). However, this has changed radically with the introduction of the period referred to as Web 2.0. This period, enabled the users to comment on, change and update the content as well as reading it (Curran et al., 2007). Thus, the level of interaction between websites and users has increased and the opportunity for two-way, symmetrical communication has emerged (Capriotti et al., 2021). A comparison between Web 2.0 and Web 1.0 can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0

	Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Mode of usage	Read	Write and contribute
Unit of content	Page	Record
State	Static	Dynamic
How-to content is viewed	Web browser	Browser, RSS readers, Mobile devices, etc.
Creation of content	By web site authors	By everyone

Source: (Curran et al., 2007)