DISCOVERING TOURISTS' PREFERENCES OF SRI LANKAN FOOD AS A FORM OF DESTINATION IDENTITY

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Abstract

Food tourism is emerging as a vital component of the tourism research. Food reflects a destination's culture, their eating habit, history, and people. As name suggests, food tourism is about exploring food as a form of tourism hence many travel destinations are now concerning about their native foods and considered food as a significant item of their travel destination. Analyzing tourists' comments regarding foods always help to identify famous foods among tourists.

Though out past years several research has done based on food tourism, however comparatively less research has conducted focusing on the data mining approach with social media content.

Furthermore, identifying the tourists' famous authentic foods in certain tourism destination, identifying the foods, food variety and culinary experience in a tourists attracted destinations trough data mining are the gaps identified to conduct this research.

Social media plays an important role in tourism industry and as food related posts are popular in social media. To conduct this research, we have collected data from YouTube which was identified though several research outcomes as a tourism marketing tool from organizations and the tourist perspectives.

To analyze tourists' perception about Sri Lankan foods and food destinations, we have developed a method to analyze YouTube comments and transcripts using aspect-based opinion mining process, which targets food tourism related aspects and opinion on those aspects. Furthermore, sentiment of each aspect was analyzed for the decision-making process.

Our objectives of this research are to identify topmost popular Sri Lankan foods consumed by tourists, identify tourists' opinion regarding Sri Lankan foods and identify how well social media viewers', readers' comments affect in the food tourism.

The end goal of this research is to identify how social media contents could be used to open up a new trend to promote culinary tourism in Sri Lanka.