Abstract

The luxury travel market is increasingly gaining significance and luxury gastronomic tourism is expected to be one of the sectors which will develop the most in the next future. Extant research demonstrates the effectiveness of social media marketing in the tourism industry, however, empirical analyses on how social media are used in the luxury gastronomy sector are rare. This topic is particularly relevant in the Italian context, where food is a key component of the national tourist image. The current study evaluates social media strategies implemented by luxury restaurants in Italy. The author used content analysis to assess the Facebook social media activity of the three Michelin-starred restaurants located in Middle Italy. The evaluation has been done by analyzing the type of content, frequency, and popularity of posts. The study conducted demonstrates that dish-focused images, which are the content that occurs the most in the restaurants' feeds analyzed in the sample, are not necessarily significant elements to exploit in increasing users' engagement. Indeed, posts concerning Michelin star news and the chef image within the restaurant end up being those categories that incentivize the most user's interactions, thus increase popularity. The results contribute to understanding the most efficient approaches to social media marketing in the luxury gastronomic sector. Hence the findings can be used to benchmark the existing strategies and guide the development of future ones.