

Social Media as a Powerful Tool for Food Preparation and Gaining Healthy Eating Habits

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ABSTRACT: During the COVID-19 pandemic, people's food preparation and consumption behaviours changed significantly. The increase in home cooking and decrease on take-away food were positive outcomes of pandemic (Wilkins, 2020). With the increase in home cooking, social media has also emerged as an online platform for gaining awareness about consuming and preparing healthy food. People began to share their recipes on online platforms and social media, following chefs' accounts to try new recipes.

This study aims to explore the role of social platforms in promoting healthy eating habits, sharing recipes, and improving culinary skills among individuals. The qualitative research methods were employed to explore the impact of social platforms on food preparation behaviours. An online survey was conducted with 284 Turkish-speaking participants to understand the impact of social media on their relationship with food. The findings showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive impact on participants' home cooking habits, and this continued after the pandemic. While most participants stated that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube were the main source of inspiration and recipes, younger participants stated that Pinterest was their most preferred platform for recipes. This shows that not only cultural aspect but also the age groups within the same culture can have different preferences when searching for recipes on social platforms.

In conclusion, social media is a powerful tool in consumers' lives while consuming and preparing food and gaining new skills. However, it is essential to be mindful of the potential risks associated with social media, including misinformation, incorrect use of ingredients which can cause health problems and other issues.

1 INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I vividly remember my mother's recipe notebook, where she meticulously documented new dishes, she learned from friends. These meetings, where recipes were shared while tasting each other's prepared dishes, emphasized the social and cultural importance of food. The maroon-covered A5 notebook, filled with recipes in his own handwriting, symbolized a repository of his culinary knowledge and traditions. When I started cooking and baking, inspired by my mother, I started recording my own recipes in a notebook, just like her.

With the emergence and development of the internet and later mobile phones, both my mother and I began to search for new recipes and share them with each other on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. This shift in recipe discovery isn't unique to my family. A survey by Cassandra, a youth-focused consumer insight company, reveals that 53% of Gen-Zers find their culinary inspiration on TikTok (Nallapati, 2022). Based on my own experience and the results of this survey, it is possible to say how effective social media is in our lives and what we consume in all generations.

However, in this digital age, it is of great importance to consider the accuracy of the information shared on these platforms and the extent to which users trust this information. This study aims to explore food-related content on social media and examine the impact of this content on users' relationships with food and eating habits. By understanding these dynamics, we can better understand the role of social media in shaping contemporary culinary practices.

1.1 *Overview of changes in food preparation and consumption*

Throughout history, environmental and social changes have significantly influenced societal behaviours. For example, during wartime, people often grew their own food, leading to a peak in allotment holding during World War II. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, this trend declined as people increasingly turned to purchasing food from emerging supermarkets and convenience stores instead of cultivating their own (Armstrong et al., 2020).

We have witnessed significant changes in society's eating habits and food consumption not only during wartimes, but also recently during the COVID-19

pandemic. The results of a survey conducted in 2020 revealed that 45% of consumers cooked more home-made meals due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This statistic highlights how the pandemic encouraged people to take up cooking as a hobby. Cooking videos or posts have played an important role in providing people with the skills and knowledge to prepare home-made meals. Additionally, 9% of individuals surveyed reported planning to watch more cooking programs, demonstrating the increased interest in cooking programs on TV or online during the COVID-19 quarantine (Lindner, 2024).

Another study conducted with 764 Australian adults examined the changes in food habits during COVID-19 in 2020. According to the results, 63% of Australian participants experienced positive food-related experiences during the pandemic, such as cooking from scratch, trying new recipes, and relying less on takeaways. They also reported that family members joined them in preparing and eating food (Margerison et al., 2024).

As it is documented in many studies, an increase in home cooking has been observed in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic period. According to the COVID-19 European Food Behaviours study, which surveyed 5,000 consumers in 10 European countries, people stated that they would continue to cook both during and after the pandemic. The results showed that 27% of participants cited having time to cook, 24% cited good cooking skills, 22% cited having the right equipment, and 21% cited the availability of products as important factors after the pandemic. Overall, nearly half of the consumers said that being healthy would be more important, 34% said that eating healthy would be more important, and 35% said that buying locally produced food would be more important after the epidemic (EIT Food, 2020).

Due to the lock down and social distancing rules adopted by the governments, the consumption of ready foods, takeaways, food delivery services decreased, and people began to prepare their own food. Cooking, looking for recipes, utilizing social media to share healthy food preparation techniques became more popular among social media users.

1.2 *Social media as a platform for sharing recipes and promoting healthy eating*

The use of social networks has significantly changed the way consumers search for and select products and services. Taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by social media, recent research has begun to pioneer the use of online technologies to investigate the effects of social structure on the spread of health behaviors (Centola, 2013). Social media platforms have become essential sources of information and communication, including food-related content (Cui et al., 2019). These platforms have begun to influence food choices and dining experiences, bringing

benefits such as democratized food reviews and relatable food influencers. Food influencers are surpassing traditional critics, with influencer marketing projected to grow by 42% in 2024. Their relatable, ongoing recommendations resonate more with audiences, impacting restaurants, grocery shopping, kitchen appliances, and recipes (Bedford-Flood, 2023).

Social media is now used to expand food options, get recipes, and showcase meals prepared or consumed by adults. Some research shows that perceived consumption norms from social media can influence the intake of both low- and high-calorie foods and beverages (Hawkins et al., 2020).

Since the launch of Instagram in 2010, food has been one of the most popular hashtags on the platform, with more than 250 million posts. While 38% of Instagram users view food content, 27% of users share food content (MenuTiger, 2024a). The table below shows the food-related hashtags and the number of posts shared on Instagram (Table 1).

Table 1. Instagram posts with food related hashtags

#hashtag	Posts
#food	528M
#instafood	244M
#foodstagram	126M
#healthyfood	123M
#healthyeating	45.5M
#healthyrecipes	12M

Besides Instagram reels, TikTok tutorials that show step-by-step cooking methods are also popular posts that boost individuals' cooking skills. With these posts, the DIY culinary culture has reached new levels in 2024 (MenuTiger, 2024b). While Instagram transforms food into art by popularizing visually appealing dishes through influencers who attract young audiences with striking posts and storytelling, TikTok is leading the way in food content with quick, viral videos that encourage creativity in the kitchen (Bedford-Flood, A. 2023).

Instagram users not only share food photos interact with other users, but according to the results of a research, they also use the platform to track what they eat, to receive social support, and to provide social support. While following chefs or other accounts for DIY tutorials, some users also use Instagram to support their health goals and to track their daily healthy eating habits by posting food photos (Chung et al., 2017).

As social media continues to influence culinary practices and healthy eating habits, it becomes essential to understand the broader implications of these trends.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *The effects of COVID-19 pandemic on cooking habits*

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought numerous changes to social life, including significant shifts in people's relationship with food. It has enabled a sustainable approach to food, particularly through home cooking, reversing the decline in home cooking that dates back to the mid-1960s (Wilkins, 2020).

According to the survey conducted by Hunter, a food and beverage marketing communication firm, American consumers' food preferences and behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic showed a rise in home cooking and baking. The survey revealed that 54% of participants were cooking more, and 50% felt more confident in the kitchen. Participants not only increased their cooking activities but also discovered new ingredients, brands, and products. Additionally, one-third of the respondents mentioned that they were searching for new recipes, which helped them reduce food waste by 57%. Furthermore, 51% indicated that they would continue cooking post-pandemic, citing saving money and eating healthier as the primary reasons (Hunter, 2020).

Another survey which was conducted on Italian consumers' eating habits and lifestyle changes during the COVID-19 lockdown found that during the quarantine, Italians showed a greater desire to cook, particularly baking, leading to increased consumption of homemade desserts, bread, and pizza. On the other hand, consumption of salty snacks, snacks, processed meat, carbonated and sugary drinks decreased. 15% of 3533 said that they turned to farmers or organic purchasing groups for fruit and vegetables. During the quarantine, Italians paid attention to Mediterranean diet, and the quality of the diet remained high, especially in Northern and Central Italy, where BMI was lower compared to Southern Italy and Islands. (Di Renzo et al., 2020).

A study in New Zealand explored how changes in sources of food and cooking advice, as well as reasons for recipe selection, were associated with shifts in dietary patterns during the first COVID-19 lockdown. The findings showed that dietary choices are influenced by social determinants. Nutrition and health experts, along with family and friends, significantly impacted food and cooking decisions both before and during lockdown. Among the 2,977 respondents, 50.9% and 53.9% reported being influenced by nutrition and health experts before and during lockdown, respectively, and these individuals also demonstrated healthier eating patterns and lower scores for unhealthy eating patterns. The reasons for selecting recipes were also closely related to eating habits. The most frequently cited reasons for recipe choice were taste, availability of ingredients and health benefits. Discussions about home cooking or homemade food online suggest that recipe sharing,

and home cooking remain significant cultural practices (Roy et al., 2021).

While changing the food preparing and consumption habits in the kitchen, pandemic also changed society's relation with the food supplies. The studies on impact of pandemic on allotment gardening show that despite the challenges faced in many areas, COVID-19 created opportunities for the development of gardening. By allowing people to spend more time in their gardens, especially during isolation periods, it encouraged food independence by alleviating the problem in food chains (Kacprzak & Szczepańska, 2024). According to the findings of a survey by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners; with the COVID-19 period, UK local authorities observed an increase in applications for allotment gardens, leading to waiting lists (Shoen et al., 2021).

Taken together, these existing research results suggest that the consumer-food relationship has changed positively during the pandemic. Consumers have become more knowledgeable about food preparation, food supply and eating healthy eating. They have become more confident and started looking for recipes and sharing them with others. As the pandemic limited face-to-face interaction, the sharing of food-related content on social media increased, making it one of the main sources of cooking and healthier eating tips.

2.2 *Influence of social media on food preparation and consumption*

The concept of social media, which came to the fore with the establishment of social networking sites such as Facebook in 2004, has been used by consumers and companies to share and interact with others for more than 20 years. In its simplest definition, social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and sharing of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Table 2. Most popular social networks worldwide, ranked by number of monthly active users (DataPortal, 2024).

Online platforms	Number of active users (millions)
Facebook	3065
Instagram	2000
WhatsApp	2000
TikTok	1582
WeChat	1343
Messenger	1010
Telegram	900
Snapchat	800
X/Twitter	611
Pinterest	498

According to the statistics there are more than 18 billion active social media users, where Facebook is on

the top of the list with 3.06 billion active users as of July 2024 and is followed by YouTube and Instagram (Table 2).

The statistics show that main reasons for using internet are finding information, contacting friends and family, watching videos and shows, following news and events, finding new ideas, learning how to do things, listening to music, studying (DataPortal, 2024). Since food is a common topic that attracts the attention of many users, it becomes the main subject of these usage reasons and is one of the leading contents created on social media. Sharing food photos, recipes, short-form cooking videos, healthy eating tips are some of the subjects that are shared as a post or video on online platforms. For social media users, sharing the meals they eat or prepare is also a way to promote themselves and interact with other users. French politician Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who lived between 1755 and 1826, emphasized how important food is in a person's self-representation by saying in his work, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are" (Brillat-Savarin, 2004).

Facebook (2019) reported that 36% of the users age between 18–34-year-olds say that they engage with food-related posts every week, and more than 25% use social media for culinary inspiration. Food is having an important role in many people's lives and for younger audiences it's part of their identity rather than just an enjoyable experience. According to survey results, 87% of food buyers aged between 18-34 said they discovered new food or recipe ideas on social platforms through Facebook and its apps. Nearly half of those aged 18-34 said they discovered new food products through social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. People are becoming more open to trying new recipes in the kitchen; 31% of participants said that when they see a new product online, they consider using it in a recipe (Facebook, 2019).

Chicory's 2023 report shows that 88% of American consumers use online recipes which are provided by online food blogs, social media or video platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Pinterest. The consumers use mostly organic search (search engine like Google, etc.), social media, direct search (favourite recipe sites or food blogs), recommendations from friends and family, newsletters to discover online recipes. The report results also highlighted that 54% of consumers are using online recipes more than the previous year. Consumers also state that online recipes help them ensure meal variety, make tastier meals, save time on meal planning and grocery shopping, maintain a healthy lifestyle, save money, avoid food waste, follow a specific diet (Chicory, 2023).

In another study, Twitter contents of a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) health campaign #MyPlateMyWins, which was launched in 2011 to educate American population about new dietary

guidelines and to promote healthy eating behaviours, was examined. The MyPlate campaign was designed to remind Americans about eating healthy by reaching them via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Healthy food was suggested for people and requested them to share their plates photo on Twitter using the hashtag #MyPlate. The campaign updated as #MyPlateMyWins to align with the dietary guidelines of 2015-2020 to provide more personalized healthy food choices by considering the culture and preference of the people, and #MyPlateMyWins was introduced as the new hashtag. The research on this campaign aimed to understand which strategies can be effective to change people's eating habits. 7,960 tweets posted on Twitter and the researcher analysed 389 of them, under the hashtag #MyPlateMyWins. Under the "small changes in eating habits" category, 68.9% of the tweets were encouraging readers to make small changes in their eating habits. 22% of the tweets for "food-making habits at home" were aiming to motivate people to cook food at their homes. 21.6% of the tweets under "setting healthy eating goals" category was on setting a goal for healthy eating habits. Other categories that the tweets posted were acting as healthy eating role models for children, remaining physically active. The users liked their posts and shared those tweets by reposting. The #MyPlateMyWins Twitter campaign engaged with the consumers and encourage readers to gain healthier eating habits (Uddin, 2017).

The eating habits of the population are influenced by many factors, and information that has an impact on consumers' preferences comes from many sources, mostly through the media. In this context, another study was conducted by researchers at the University of Sarajevo using an online survey to determine the influence of media on the dietary habits of the population. 225 participants; 152 women and 73 men, aged between 15 and 67, participated and filled in the eating habits questionnaire. The survey results confirmed the influence of media on sweet and fast-food choices and proved the direct impact of advertising for these foods on choices and consumer awareness (Bajraktarević et al., 2023).

The power of social media is also discovered by brands and especially in food context it became a platform for chefs and food bloggers to share their skills, recipes and cooking videos. Table 3 lists the most popular food accounts on Instagram (2024) where chefs are at the top of the list. Food bloggers significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions, and that is the reason they can be called as "market-movers". These bloggers act as community organisers, archivists and curators, documenting community practices and thereby shaping communal behaviour. Their partnerships with food companies enable online recipes to influence the product choices and, consequently, the nutritional content of meals. A study reveals that men follow more profiles than women,

while women are more active followers. This difference is attributed to the types of information searched: men are more drawn to food photos or restaurant suggestions, whereas women browse food bloggers' profiles to discover new recipes, products, or dietary trends (Fiorentino, 2019).

Table 3. The popular food accounts on Instagram.

Account	Country	Follower
Gordon Ramsay	UK	17.6M
Jamie Oliver	UK	10.4M
Martha Stewart	US	4.4M
Ree Drummond	US	4.3M
Rena/Healthy Fitness Meals	US	3.8M
Yolanda Gampp	Canada	2.7M
Deliciously Ella	UK	2.4M

The content shared by chefs and food bloggers on social media and the parallel increase in food-related content such as meal preparation and healthy nutrition have encouraged users to apply recipes online and improve their cooking skills. A study in Finland explored how Finnish food bloggers perceive their agency in describing their relationship with food on their blogs. Data was collected from 19 Finnish food bloggers. Since these bloggers were from Finland, a country with abundant resources and education on food and health, their backgrounds influenced their blog content, values, and attitudes toward food and dining. The results of the study indicated a reciprocal relationship between bloggers and their audiences. The bloggers aimed to enrich their followers' relationship with food and the food culture by sharing inspirations, new ideas, and food-related values. This research offers unique insights into human behaviour on social media and its effects on interpersonal relationships (Partanen and Uusiautti, 2023).

Researchers explored social media users' reactions to a post they saw on social media and found that 53% of respondents inspired by a post they saw in their feed or timeline and tried the recipe. 85% of respondents said they felt cravings for a food when they saw it on social media (Melore, 2021).

According to a study on social media and cooking, 97% of internet users have tried recipes they found on social media, with 77% stating it has improved their cooking and baking skills. Chicory's 2023 report indicates that 75% of consumers purchase new ingredients or products due to online recipes and 80% had inspiration to cook a new meal. Additionally, another study found that 72% of users prefer online blogs for cooking assistance and trying new recipes, and 77% credit social media for improving their culinary skills (Chicory, 2023). While traditionally cooking has often been viewed as a gendered household task for women, it has been democratized with social media, making cooking

accessible and enjoyable to a wider audience, regardless of gender (Nagy, 2023).

Another study focusing on French food influencers and their followers, explored the social media and its impact on users with three study groups. In the first study, 213 women aged between 18 and 45 years who followed at least one food influencer on Instagram said that the ease of the recipe, verbal persuasion, and cooking experience have a positive impact on applying the recipes at home. In the second study a carrot cake recipe video (which can be perceived as unhealthy or healthy by participants) from Instagram was showed to the participants from both genders (175 participants, including 84 men and 91 women). Again, the ease of the recipe and past cooking experience were related to self-efficacy, and it had a positive impact on imitation intention. In the third study a total of 120 participants in both genders participated and the same video in Study 2 showed by labelling to understand the health benefits and concerns. Three groups, the control, the healthy and the unhealthy groups arranged, and participants were assigned to one of these groups. The video was labelled as "the recipe of the day" for the control group; "the healthy recipe of the day" for the healthy group; "the gourmet recipe of the day" for the unhealthy group. The results showed that the labels related with health messages didn't have any impact on the recipe perceptions. While the results of three studies showed that cooking was a pleasant and social activity for French consumers, researchers compared this result with American consumers and stated that health labels may be more important for the American consumers and explained the difference and results with cultural aspects which are also a factor affecting behaviour (Sokolova et al., 2024a).

The same researchers examined the findings from previous research (study 1) to explore the role of influencers in promoting healthier habits, particularly focusing on home cooking. They aimed to understand how influencers can create vicarious experiences through recipe content and their impact on individuals' intentions to cook at home. The results suggest that showcasing the cooking process and sharing recipes can encourage followers to replicate and cook at home through vicarious experiences. By setting a positive example with their cooking practices, influencers can significantly influence their audience's behaviour (Sokolova et al., 2024b).

As it is seen on existing research results home cooking is in an increase since COVID-19 pandemic. The social media has a great impact on this behaviour change which is not only recognized in adults but in Gen Z as well. Due to the abundance of online recipes on social platforms, social media users began to feel more confident in their kitchen, follow a specific diet, save time on meal planning and grocery shopping, avoid food waste. Considering that over \$1 trillion worth of food is wasted each

year (World Bank, 2020) (which represents more than one-third of all the food that is produced globally) and the increasing cost of living, it can be said that home cooking will also be effective on decreasing the food waste and also it can support a more sustainable approach. Food consumption can be balanced through cooking, and this can also be a trigger for social change.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methodology

As it is aforementioned; in recent years people use social media more than previous years. This is mostly referred as the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the period that people were surrounded by the rules of the safety measure of physical distancing which limits the social interaction in the real world. However, social media gave an opportunity to people to connect with each other; it was mostly used for sharing and disseminating information. According to the Global Web Index, more than 40% of people spent more time in social media during the pandemic (Malik et al., 2023).

Social media usage has led to an increase in the number of monthly active users across all major platforms in 2021 compared to 2019. At the top of the list is TikTok, which has grown by 38%, while Pinterest is in second place, followed by Reddit. Facebook and Twitter also increased in use during the COVID-19 period (Dixon, 2022).

Social media became a platform for people not only a media for connecting them with their families and friends, but also a place that they can share their life, experiences, stories. These kinds of contents supported the emergence of new usage types such as using social media to share information about health and wellbeing which also followed by posts such as eating healthy food or recipes for preparing food.

In this study, a survey is conducted to understand the healthy food eating and preparing habits of people and to gather information on how they use social media for this purpose. A total of 284 Turkish speaking participants took part in the survey, comprising 189 females, 94 males, and 1 individual who preferred not to disclose their gender (Table 4).

Table 4. Participant demographics

Age	Participants	Female	Male	NA
18-25	5	4	1	-
25-35	31	18	12	1
35-45	120	81	39	-
45-55	79	58	21	-
55-65	38	23	15	-
65-75	11	5	6	-
75+	1	1	-	-

The survey was distributed to Turkish-speaking participants via online platforms and the results were evaluated by using the online survey system. All participants from 18 to 75 years old, were eligible to use online services and social media. In total eight questions were asked to participants, and they were expected to answer the questions choosing 1 or in some questions more than 1 options. After the survey, feedback was asked from some randomly selected participants. The results shared by preparing graphs and tables to compare the findings.

3.2 Research results

Since many studies have been conducted in various countries to investigate the impact of the pandemic on people's cooking habits, this survey was conducted to understand the changes in the cooking habits of Turkish-speaking participants and how they benefit from social media in this context.

According to the survey results, 69% of 284 participants stated that their home cooking habit increased during the COVID-19 period. One third of the male and half of the female participants, 42% of the participants in total said that they continued to cook after the pandemic as well. This shows that the positive impact of COVID-19 on home cooking can still be observed in Turkish consumers.

The survey results indicated that 84% of respondents used online platforms or social media for recipes or healthy eating tips. Additionally, 96% of participants believed that online platforms and social media enhanced their meal preparation skills. As a result of online survey, it can be said that these results align closely with findings from previous studies.

According to the survey results, Instagram was the most used social platform, with 82% of the participants, followed by YouTube with 70% (Table 5). After the survey, some participants were asked for feedback, and they mentioned that they follow some Turkish cuisine accounts and chefs on Instagram. While younger participants preferred Pinterest for recipes, another participant didn't prefer seeing recipes on Instagram because it made her crave food, preferring to search for recipes on Google instead.

Table 5. Result of the survey question; "If you follow online platforms, which of the following do you use?" (more than one option can be selected)

Online platforms	Results
Instagram	232
YouTube	200
WhatsApp	112
Facebook	70
Influencer accounts	45
Pinterest	42
Chef's blogs	40
Other	35

While benefiting from the online food preparing platforms; the participants mentioned that they make changes when trying online recipes. According to the survey results, 51% of participants made changes to ingredient amounts, 50% used alternative ingredients, 25% followed the recipe without changes, and 21% altered the cooking methods (Table 6).

Table 6. Result of the survey question; ‘Do you make any special changes when trying online recipes?’ (more than one option can be selected)

Options	Results
Changing the quantities of ingredients	145
Using alternative ingredients	142
Changing cooking methods	62
Using the recipe without any changes	72

Compared to the research results which were obtained by other researchers, the results highlighted the rise in home cooking during the COVID-19 pandemic and the use of social media in food preparation. This period provided people with more time to try new recipes and prepare healthy foods. This change in cooking habits also affected their social media content search habits and the consumers began to follow food related contents more.

3.3 Discussion

As seen in the survey results, people enjoy trying online recipes and find them useful, and adapt the recipes to suit their own needs. Since the survey conducted with Turkish-speaking participants their feedback was very important to understand how they access to recipes or which accounts have more influence on their home cooking activities.

After the survey, some participants mentioned a web page ‘nefis yemek tarifleri’ (delicious food recipes in English) where they find many meal recipes. This web page also has an Instagram account with 11M followers, more than Jamie Oliver's followers. This suggests that studies focusing on specific locales can provide more accurate data on the behavior of different cultures. Moreover, preferences for social media usage on food-related content can vary among different age groups within the same culture. While young people prefer Pinterest or TikTok, adults prefer search engines, YouTube, and Instagram for online recipes.

In summary, the results show that online social platforms like Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook are the most used platforms where recipes and healthy eating tips are shared. When content is created in an appropriate and customizable way, it can significantly support users’ health and well-being, contributing to social change by helping them acquire and share healthy habits.

4 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the impact of social media on users’ relationship with food. It began with a literature review on the previous research conducted in various countries with diverse participants. To contribute to the field, a survey was conducted with Turkish-speaking participants. The results were similar to the other researchers’ findings. However, the research results highlighted that some local food accounts can have more followers than the global accounts. Additionally, different age groups in the same culture can also have different preferences for social media usage on food related contents.

The research results showed how online recipe users tailor recipes to their preferences. The highest scores on changing the ingredient quantities and using alternatives show that users prefer customizing recipes and sharing their experiences. Comments under many recipes on social media, such as how users applied the recipe, what they changed, what they recommend, and whether they liked it, encourage others to follow these accounts and cook.

When talking about seamless integration of physical and digital worlds, the ‘phygital’ approach to food preparation offers opportunities, especially in customizing recipes due to personal needs (health or taste related needs). As a suggestion; the integration of AI into the recipe sharing process could be beneficial for the users. AI can process data to understand individuals' preferences, predict changes they might make (alternative ingredient options, quantities, cooking time, cooking style, etc.), and then create more customized recipes for each user.

The results of this research and the previous studies highlight that cooking skills and efforts towards healthy eating habits, which have increased during the COVID-19 period, have further developed with social media. This development also leads to more sustainable social change in food. People's relationship with food and sharing it on social media gives impetus to social change. It is obvious that such relationships, in addition to the benefits to society, can also provide solutions to various problems such a food supply, waste food, and diseases caused by unhealthy nutrition.

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