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Research Paper

The Role of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior in The Food and Beverage Industry

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Abstract
This paper, entitled "The Role of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior in the Food and Beverage Industry," analyzes the groundbreaking effect of internet-based content producers on the decision-making process of consumers. The advent of non-exclusive advertising strategies has led to the rise of SMIs, serving as important "social proof" players in the visually-oriented food and beverage industry.
A combined methodology is employed in this research, with the data obtained from 160 participants analyzed for any relationship between the characteristics of influencers, such as reliability, authority, and credibility, on consumers' perceptions of brands and willingness to buy. Instagram and YouTube were found to be the top-performing platforms, and Gen Z and Millennial generations were discovered to exhibit high engagement levels with influencer-related content. Regression analysis confirmed a significant positive association between social media interactions and purchasing decisions, although the influence is subject to moderating variables, including cost and quality.
The study shows how micro-influencers may actually be more effective than celebrities, since they appear more authentic to the audience. In addition, problems related to lack of transparency and fake followers are currently faced by this industry, and thus ethical disclosures must be made. At the end of the day, what we can take from this is that visual storytelling must become a priority for food brands.

I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

It should be noted that the effectiveness of micro-influencers can outweigh that of celebrities because of their authenticity and specialization. However, there are some difficulties related to transparency and "fake followers" that require ethical disclosure. Nonetheless, the research offers stratA social media influencer is a person who has earned credibility and a substantial following on one or several social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) owing to his or her unique knowledge or content creation skills. As a result, due to the authority he or she has achieved, they become influential and may impact others' purchasing choices and opinions.
To Be Recognized as an influencer in both professional and academic settings, there have to be these three factors:

- **Reach:** This implies distributing information among a certain amount of audience.
- **Engagement:** It involves a measure of participation in content creation by the followers (likes, comments, and shares).
- **Niche Authority:** A particular area in which the person is an expert (fitness, money management, video games, cuisine).egic insights for companies selling foods to engage their clients through visual communication.

Categorization of influencers:

- **Nano-Influencers (1K–10K):** Highly trusted and community-oriented. They tend to be "peers" rather than celebrities.
- **Micro-Influencers (10K–100K):** Niche experts. These influencers typically have the highest engagement rates because they engage deeply with their specific audience.
- **Macro-Influencers (100K–1M):** For brand exposure on a massive scale. These influencers provide professional-quality content and have credible expertise.
- **Mega-Influencers (1M+):** Often celebrities or top-tier creators. Best for top-of-funnel reach rather than targeted conversions.

MICRO INFLUENCERS VS CELEBRITY INFLUENCERS

Table 1.1 Difference between Micro Influencers and Celebrity Influencers

Feature	**Celebrity Influencers (Mega)**	**Micro-Influencers**
Follower Count	1 Million +	10k – 100k
Main Benefit	Massive Brand Awareness	High Engagement & Trust
Cost	Very High	Affordable / Negotiable
Conversion	Lower (broad audience)	Higher (niche audience)
Industry Use	Global launches (e.g., Coca-Cola)	Niche food brands or local cafes

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR:

The term Consumer Behavior can be defined as an individual, group or organization as well as their activities involved in acquiring, using or disposing of products or services, which includes any consumer responses preceding or subsequent to such activities.

"The behavior that consumers display in seeking, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their personal needs"
- Schiff man

Consumer Behaviour Role:

Role	Description
Initiator	The individual who determines that some need or want is not being met and authorize a purchase to rectify the situation.
Influencer	A person who by some intentional or unintentional word or action influences the purchase decision, the actual purchase, and /or the use of the product or service.
Buyer	The individual who actually makes the purchase decision.
User	The person who directly involved in the consumption or use of the purchase

Figure 1.1 Consumer Behaviour Role

Types of Consumers:

- **Personal Consumer:** This refers to the person that purchases products for his/ her own personal use.
- **Household Consumer:** This refers to the person or people that purchase products for the household.
- **Organisational Consumer:** Private businesses, Government departments and agencies, and Institutions make up Organizational Consumers.

Application of consumer behaviour:

- Market opportunity analysis
- Target market selection
- Marketing-mix determination
- In social marketing and non-profit organizations
- In decision-making by the Government

CONSUMER RESEARCH AND CB:

Consumer research is a special form of marketing research and as such, calls for the application of special methods of research that not only gather information about customers but also improve business-customer relations.

The important aspects of consumer research methodology involve

1. Objectives of the research
2. Gathering and analysis of secondary data
3. Designing a primary research study
4. Collecting primary data
5. Analysing the data
6. Preparing a report on the findings

FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY:

Food and Beverage industry includes all organizations that manufacture, package, distribute, and serve food and their ingredients. These include fresh food items, processed food, alcoholic beverages, and non-alcoholic beverages.

Conceptual Meaning: The food industry goes beyond the mere 'sale of food.' It is an integrated value chain, which turns raw commodity inputs such as wheat, milk, or coffee beans into valuable outputs like flour, packaged milk, and packaged coffee. They add value by processing, packaging, and distributing their product to make sure that consumers receive food that is safe, easy-to-use, and tastes great.

The food industry is often bifurcated based on whether consumption happens:

1. **Production & Processing (The "Supply" Side):**

- **Dairy and Meat:** Processing raw animal products into milk, cheese, or packaged meats.
- **Grains and Cereals:** Producing flour, bread, and breakfast cereals.
- **Beverages:** Manufacturing soft drinks, mineral water, juices, and alcoholic spirits.
- **Packaged Foods:** Frozen meals, snacks (chips, biscuits), and canned goods.

2. **Food Services (The "Experience" Side):**

- **HORECA:** An acronym for Hotels, Restaurants, and Cafes.
- **Quick Service Restaurants (QSR):** Fast food chains concentrating more on throughput and speed.
- **Catering:** For institutions such as educational institutes, hospitals, and office spaces.

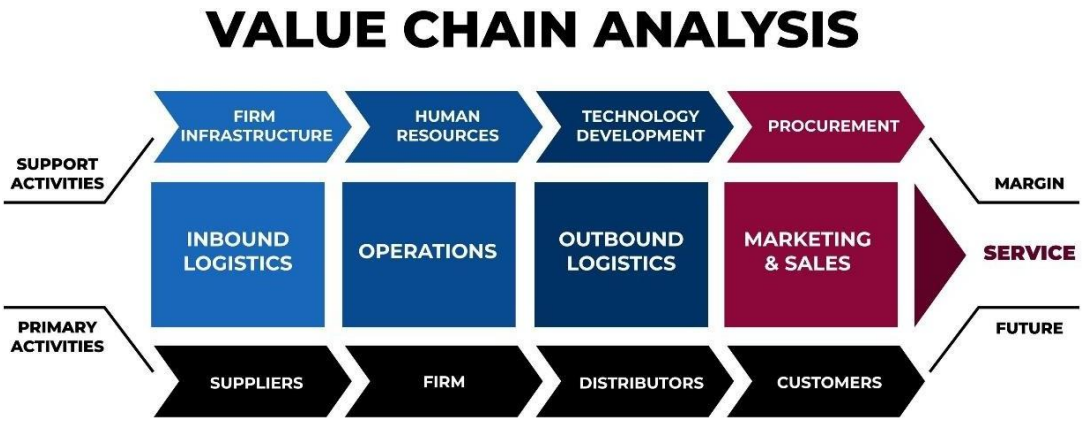


Figure 1.2 Value Chain Analysis

Deep Insights into Current Trends (2025-2026):

Research findings in the industry, especially in countries such as India and China, indicate that the industry is experiencing a "Nutrition Transition" in which

1. **The Health & Wellness Pivot**: Health & Wellbeing Trend: The need for functional food has been observed. Functional foods are the food that provides something apart from basic nutritional value. Such food can include nutraceuticals, plant-based diet, and organic food products. The trend among consumers is shifting from calorie-dense food to nutrient-dense foods.
2. **Digital Transformation**: Technology plays an important role at every stage.

- Industry 4.0: The use of IoT (Internet of Things) and Artificial Intelligence in tracing food safety and reduction in wastage in the supply chain.
- E-commerce and Quick Commerce: The emergence of apps such as Swiggy and Zomato has led to convenience being the top priority for middle-class consumers in cities.

3. **Sustainability & Traceability**: It is becoming more common for customers to have knowledge of the source of their food. This trend has resulted in the use of Clean Label (minimal, natural ingredients) marketing and sustainable packaging.

Key Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior:

In the F&B sector, buying decisions are no longer just about price. They are governed by:

- **Social Proof:** Social Media Influencers wield tremendous power to influence purchases, especially when it comes to platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.
- **Psychological Well-being:** The new consumer perceives food as a way to care about himself ("Health is Wealth").
- **Atmospherics:** Atmospherics have become very important in the restaurant industry to make customers feel happy about the experience.

Market Challenges (2026 Outlook):

Despite growth, there are structural “headwinds” for the industry:

1. **Labor Scarcity:** A 7% increase in wages is driving restaurants and manufacturing plants to automate their “repetitive functions,” such as hamburger flipping and package assembly.
2. **"Clean Label" Pressure:** Consumers today require “Clean 5” products, those made from only five recognizable and natural ingredients.
3. **The "Aesthetic" Economy:** With the rise of TikTok and Instagram, food items need to be visually appealing. Viral trends can make or break brands in weeks, forcing companies to change their production schedule from biennial to semiannual, or micro-trends, within 6 months.

The evolution of traditional marketing funnels into the concept of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) is inevitable in the digital age. In the Food and Beverage industry, the change is especially radical in that consumers look for "social proof" through their smartphone screens rather than depending on conventional ads only.

Social Media Influencer Marketing (F&B industry) represents the interaction between companies selling food products and social media personalities whose impact lies in being able to sway the purchasing decisions of their engaged audience. Such capability comes out of a set of qualities attributed to an influencer, namely expertise, authentic voice, and trustworthiness in their field (gourmet cooking, veganism, food hacking).

The current paper focuses on the evolution of social media marketing in the industry from "information seeking" to "affective relationship building." Considering the very nature of food, social media marketers are able to fill the gap between an item and the consumer need with visual images and emotions.

In the current period, there has been a profound shift in the sphere of information acquisition and business transactions. Traditional advertising mediums, including TV commercials and newspaper publications, are no longer considered the only means of communicating product messages. Instead, an advanced form of marketing strategy has emerged, with the core focus being on Social Media Influencers (SMIs). Such influencers create strong bonds with their audiences through their vast following networks and tailored content.

Feature	Traditional Advertising (TV/Print)	Social Media Influencer Marketing
Communication	One-way (Brand to Consumer)	Two-way (Dialogue/Engagement)
Perceived Role	Corporate Sales Pitch	Recommendation from a "Friend"

Trust Source	Brand Reputation	Relatability & Personal Experience
Engagement	Low/Passive	High (Likes, Comments, Shares)
Targeting	Mass Audience (Broad)	Niche Segments (Laser-focused)

Table 1.2 Difference between Traditional Advertising and Social Media Influencer Marketing

1. The Source Credibility Model

This core model suggests that an influencer's power lies on the basis of three criteria:

- **Expertise:** Expertise: The ability or competence of the source to make statements on a particular issue (for example, chef speaking about the ingredients).
- **Trustworthiness:** The credibility of the sender as being genuine, sincere, and reliable.
- **Attractiveness:** The likeable appearance of the source, which results in fans getting comfortable enough to "lower their guard".

2. Parasocial Interaction (PSI):

It is typical that a one-sided relationship develops between followers and influencers. For the food domain, this psychological aspect plays a huge role because people feel the same intimacy as if they were enjoying dinner with the influencer, thus boosting their likelihood of following brand suggestions.

The Digital Food Landscape:

Various apps perform unique behavioral functions in the food industry

- **Instagram (The Aesthetic Hub):** deal for sharing "Visual Menus" and premium dishes. Research proves that Instagram's ability to provide visual content is the key component in forming a positive attitude towards the brands among the middle-class Indians.
- **TikTok (The Trend Engine**): Motivated by Humor and Novelty. TikTok creates "viral cravings" of food (such as Niloufer chai and its bun Maska trend). In this case, the "hedonic experience," i.e., pure joy of watching videos, becomes a more influential factor than expertise.
- **YouTube (The Educational Deep-Dive):** Utilized for creating detailed content such as reviews and cooking demonstrations. It forms the greatest degree of "Niche Authority."

Table 1.3 Examples of Behavioral Driver

Viral Trend	**Location Example**	**Behavioral Driver**
The Baahubali Thali	Kukatpally / Hitech City	Visual Hedonics: The spectacle of size and variety over mere hunger.
Bizarre Fusion Food	Old City / Tarnaka	Curiosity & Humor: Watching a "Gulab Jamun Burger" for the viral "shock factor."
Aesthetic Cafes	Jubilee Hills	Social Status: "Instagram" decor and "Pull-up" cakes that create a viral aesthetic.

Impact on the Consumer Decision-Making Process

Influencers do not just "sell"; they guide the consumer through a five-stage journey:

1. **Need Recognition:** The influencer makes a video titled "What I eat in a day" and prompts customers to purchase a particular diet or an energy drink.
2. **Information Search:** Gen Z and millennials no longer turn to Google for information but instead explore TikTok and Instagram for information like "Best Cafes in Hyderabad" or "Is [Brand X] Organic?"
3. **Evaluation of Alternatives:** Many influencers engage in "taste test" or "comparison videos" that allow consumers to evaluate alternatives.
4. **Purchase Intention:** Influencers use "link in bio" or "promo codes" and make consumers act on the "Fear of Missing Out."
5. **Post-Purchase Evaluation:** The followers upload their pictures tagged with the influencer, creating a continuous cycle of "User Generated Content."

Table 1.4 Impact on F&B Industry

Technology	Impact on F&B Industry
AI Personalization	Tailoring a particular health drink based on your past Instagram activity.
Blockchain	Browsing through the "farm-to-fork" process of organic rice via a QR scan.
Virtual Influencers	The use of AI for generating virtual personalities to sell food items 24/7.
Social Commerce	Buying directly from TikTok or Instagram via just one tap.

II. Review of Literature

Swetha, V. P. (2025) - Effect of social media marketing on consumer food products in Chennai in terms of their buying behavior and decisions. This paper studies the effect of social media marketing on consumer behavior in the food industry in Chennai. The study shows that there is a great influence of social media marketing on the buying decision process of consumers from beginning to end through Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Visuals, influencers, and advertisements play an important role in creating awareness about products and building trust in the brands. Besides, social interactions like likes, comments, and shares by consumers also contribute to building the relationships between brands and consumers.

Koay, K. Y., & Lim, W. M. (2025) = Food and beverages industry social media influencer marketing. This research paper will focus on the increasing significance of influencer marketing in the F&B industry. The importance of social media influencers in influencing consumers' thoughts and preferences is highlighted. This research observes that changes in digital marketing platforms like Instagram Reels and stories as well as location tracking can be utilized as a form of engagement. This research observes that marketers need to be constantly adaptable to changes for survival.

Prasetya, M. D., et al. (2025) - Social media marketing trends: Comprehensive systematic review of existing trends, obstacles, and future prospects. The systematic review integrates findings of 23 articles for discovering prominent trends in social media marketing. The article under analysis reveals that influential marketing, consumer engagement, and modern technologies including artificial intelligence (AI) and big data are among the most prevalent trends. The notion of parasocial relationship is introduced for analyzing relationships between consumers and influencers, which contribute to fostering loyalty. In addition, it considers obstacles that marketing organizations face while developing social media marketing campaigns.

Rana, S. (2025) - Effects of traditional and modern integrated marketing communication on brand equity. This study analyzes the impacts of traditional and digital approaches on the brand equity development process. The research recognizes sales promotions as a driving force behind perceptions about a brand and emphasizes different attitudes of male and female consumers toward certain products and advertising campaigns. In addition, it proves that integrating traditional and modern means of communication is necessary to create an efficient positioning strategy for brands.

Panigrahi, R. R., Singh, N., & Muduli, K. (2025) — This article reviews the ways how new technologies such as IoT, blockchain, artificial intelligence affect the robustness and efficacy of food supply chains (FSC). Among major topics covered in the article, it should be mentioned such important issues as sustainability of the process, industry 4.0, and food security in times of global warming. In particular, this study touches upon the peculiarities of SMEs in the informal FSC sector due to such challenges as limited resources and technological illiteracy.

Tan, D. M. (2025) — In this review, the evolution of marketing from an intuitive approach to a more sophisticated form through artificial intelligence is discussed. The study highlights three main trends, which include the implementation of personalization and real-time marketing, utilization of predictive analytics, and need for acquiring technical knowledge and ethics among marketers. The research shows that companies should consider incorporating technologies and aligning them with customer expectations and data privacy requirements. It reveals the transition toward automation in current advertisements. The results reveal that AI is not optional anymore for competitive advantage. Insights cover the balance between efficiency and ethical data processing.

Chopra, A., Jagose, J., & Pandey, A. (2025) — In this research, factors influencing consumers' intention to adopt a plant-based diet in India are analyzed. The main motivators of such behavior include health consciousness, environmental protection, and animal welfare. Moreover, the study discusses a recent shift

toward the concept of "proactive health" and its prevalence due to changing global health trends. The research concludes that today people change their lifestyles depending on their desire to consume sustainably and ethically. Insights include ways for brands to leverage health-consciousness of consumers through their diets.

Kumar, S., Bhattacharya, D., & Banerjee, M. (2025) — In this empirical study of the organic food market in India, the authors look into the exact drivers that influence consumer behavior in terms of their purchases of organic produce. Perceived benefits to health and food safety become the main influencers driving the intention to purchase, yet high prices and limited availability are the main obstacles. The authors illustrate the difference between consumer interest in organic food and actual purchases and point out the gaps in accessibility of the market that should be filled to increase stability in the organic market.

Bhardwaj, S. (2025) — This article explores the financial aspects of the organic industry in India and discusses the possibility of its successful globalization. The paper analyzes whether the Indian organic industry has enough potential to succeed on the global market, relying on the country's agricultural history and the global demand for eco-friendly goods. As an outcome, the authors offer stakeholders a strategy of using their investments to put India on top of global exporters of organic goods. They suggest that the industry has enormous potential if there are enough investments made into its development.

Rathnasiri, M. S. H., Kumar, P., Aggarwal, B., Nair, K., & Dewasiri, N. J. (2025) — In this case, the study will focus on the restaurant sector to examine how the concept of "atmospherics," including lighting, sound, smell, and ambiance, affect customers' satisfaction and future patronage or recommendation of the restaurant. The research implies that physical environment plays an equally important role in determining customers' perception about the restaurant experience and brand loyalty in developing countries. The results show that environmental factors exert equal influence as food quality does on behavior intention. This highlights the significance of a proper environment as a source of competitive edge in hospitality management.

Kaur, H., & Singh, R. (2025) — The focus of this paper will be on the growing industry of the Ready-to-Eat (RTE) foods in particular. The study determines what factors make consumers opt for convenient and fast foods. This paper highlights the major reasons driving purchases while pointing out the problems associated with meeting the requirements for high-quality and nutritious products. According to the study results, the growth of the RTE food industry is motivated by the need for efficiency in the contemporary hectic environment of big cities.

Rathi, N., Tiwari, P., Kanwar, M., Patel, A., Singh, M., Gupta, K., & Worsley, A. (2025)
— The qualitative study, using the socio-ecological model, seeks to explore the eating behavior of children in Varanasi, India. The study reveals some important determinants such as the home environment, the effect of schools, and easy access to unhealthy foods that contribute significantly to children's food selection and health status. It also emphasizes the differences in the perspectives of children, mothers, and teachers towards healthy food intake. The study provides important insights on the fact that eating behavior is highly dependent on the food environment around them.

Singh, N., Rawat, B., Chaubey, D. S., Mani, A. P., & Singh, A. (2025) — This study examines the influences on buying green cosmetics and beauty products in North India. Adopting an approach free from gender bias, the study assesses the effects of environmental consciousness, brand credibility, and corporate social responsibility on consumers' intention to buy. The results reveal that information about labeling and authenticity play important roles in brand switching. It shows that green consumption is no longer a specialty sector but a general behavior pattern. Key learnings include strategies for cosmetic companies to establish brand credibility.

Mishra, N., Aithal, P. S., & Wadkar, S. (2024) — This empirical study discusses the change in trends from conventional means of advertisement like TV and newspapers to newer means such as the use of digital technologies. This research sheds light on the effect of changes in marketing techniques in relation to consumer buying habits. It also focuses on the decreasing importance of conventional means of advertisement and the growing role of online advertisement. This research brings forth the importance of balancing both the aspects of marketing so that various target markets can be reached effectively.

Jadhav, H. B., Sablani, S., Gogate, P., Annapure, U., Casanova, F., Nayik, G. A., Alaskar, K., Sarwar, N., & Ramniwas, S. (2023) — The study discusses several forces that influence the decision to consume nutraceuticals, which are supplements that provide more than just nutritional value to an individual. This study highlights how factors such as health consciousness, product transparency, sensory appeal, and effectiveness influence the purchase decisions made by customers. It is noted that although there may be many other influencing factors, the main factor behind consumption is the medicinal benefits provided. Nevertheless, the sensory value and taste are also crucial factors that need to be considered in order to retain the customer base.

Lim, W. M., Kumar, D., Kumar, S., Pandey, N., & Verma, D. (2023) — The present article offers an extensive literature review based on the existing body of academic works published in the Journal of Consumer

Behaviour that explores emerging trends. This study focuses on several main themes including consumer information processing, sustainable consumption, and the substantial influence of external factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, on consumer ethics around the globe. It shows how ESG has evolved from being a business practice into becoming one of the main motivators for consumers. The results of this research reveal the emergence of more conscious and ethical consumerism all over the world.

Gambhir, K., & Ashfaq, R. (2023) — In this essay, the author attempts to determine the efficiency of cooperation with niche influencers in promoting the identity of a brand and gaining additional income. The research discusses the ability of an influencer to become a specialist due to his or her followers and experience that helps him or her communicate with customers via social media. In the course of the research, it has been revealed that the power of influence can be explained by the authenticity of interaction and a "peer-like" connection between the influencer and the target audience. According to the findings, micro-influencers have more impact on people compared to celebrities.

Barta, S., Belanche, D., Fernandez, A., & Flavián, M. (2023) — In this study, it aims to understand the success factors for TikTok, particularly how humor, creativity, and content quality play important roles in driving a "hedonic experience" among TikTokers. In this regard, this study shows that humor plays a vital role in enhancing the influencer's success, especially in making their messages more influential. In doing so, the study proves that the followers' enjoyment of the content will enable them to have a good relationship with the influencers. These insights show that a high-quality hedonic experience will make the followers more willing to follow their accounts and implement their recommendations.

Kumar, G. S., Kulkarni, M., & Rathi, N. (2022) — This qualitative analysis examines changing dietary trends among the middle-class population in urban India. The study shows the impact of globalization, economic growth, and city life on the emergence of nutrition transition, which refers to replacing traditional food choices with processed foods. On the other hand, this paper emphasizes the emergence of the opposite phenomenon of growing health awareness in some population groups. At the same time, it becomes clear that the current urban Indian diet can be characterized as transitional from convenience to well-being.

Chaudhary, A., & Khatoon, S. (2022) — This study focuses on the "New Middle Class" (NMC) in Delhi-NCR to explore the effects of higher incomes per year on investment and consumption behavior. The results reveal that members of this class tend to emulate Western culture, which reflects in their increased expenditure on luxurious goods, advanced technologies, and fine-dining restaurants. This study reveals a major change in the mindset of urban professionals from "saving mentality" to "spending mentality." This study underscores the influence of aspirational consumption on the expansion of luxury industries in India.

Kim, J., & Kim, M. (2022) — This study explores the concept of influencer marketing from a psychological perspective, focusing on the relationship between the social responsibility perception of the influencer and the psychological health of the consumer. According to the study, the social responsibility demonstrated by the influencer improves their credibility and helps create better relations between them and their followers. The key finding of the research is that consumers tend to develop a positive attitude toward brands only if there is a moral connection between the influencer and the follower. In other words, modern marketing success is no longer associated with product benefits but rather with certain psychological triggers.

Memon, S. U. R., Pawase, V. R., Pavase, T. R., & Soomro, M. A. (2021) — The objective of this comparison study involves assessing the impact of the pandemic on the food and beverage sectors of China and India. This includes an assessment of the shift in customer behavior toward online food delivery services and increased health consciousness. There will be an evaluation of the difficulties experienced within the supply chain operations amid the lockdowns imposed by both countries and how this situation led to a digital transformation within the sector. The conclusions drawn from this study will show how the pandemic was a factor for bringing about permanent changes within the industry.

Guan, C., & Li, E. Y. (2021) — In this piece of editorial writing, the author analyzes how much the marketing industry has changed from conventional means of marketing to influencer-based methods of marketing, highlighting the fact that marketing as an industry has become multi-billion dollars in size. The credibility of sources in terms of expertise, trustworthy nature, and attractiveness is analyzed, while comparing the performance of celebrities and micro-influencers. It is concluded by saying that micro-influencers perform better because of their high engagement rate. This article gives insights on how the close-knit community of influencers leads to actions by consumers.

Nafees, L., Cook, C. M., Nikolov, A. N., & Stoddard, J. E. (2021) — Using empirical data gathered from a sample of 231 Instagram users, this study aims to investigate the impact of influencer power on consumer attitudes toward brand names. According to the findings, although there is a positive connection between influencer power and brand attitudes, the effect is moderated by factors such as expertise and credibility. It is essential for brands to place emphasis on credibility rather than popularity in order to have effective marketing

campaigns. The study reveals that consumers tend to be skeptical and only genuine testimonials can enhance brand equity.

Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021) — While previous studies have centered more on the advantages of influencers for brands, this study aims to analyze the effect that promotion has on influencers themselves. In particular, it investigates the effect of congruency between the brands and influencers as well as their credibility on the decision of the followers to continue following the influencer, emulate him/her, or refer others to him/her. This study has discovered that "over-promotion" or lack of fit between brands and influencers could harm the image of the latter and even cause follower attrition.

Sorakhaibam, R., Loitongbam, S., & Singh, S. S. (2021) — More precisely, in terms of examining the influence of Instagram on purchasing decisions within the food industry, the analysis identifies the source credibility and attractiveness approaches. As per the results obtained from the analysis, an individual's reliability, authority, and familiarity are the critical dimensions influencing purchasing intentions successfully. The results indicate that when analyzing influencers' impact on purchasing decisions within the food industry, it is imperative to pay attention to the elements such as visual attractiveness and credibility as "a taster." This shows that influencers act as significant mediators, whose role is to shape food consumption decisions.

Sinha, R. (2021) — The current study deals with the digital economy in India where the role of influencers in building personal brands as well as instilling credibility with the audience is analyzed. One important observation made in this regard is that the natural quality of relatability of influencers makes them much more convincing than conventional advertisements. Especially in industries which have higher engagement rate such as fashion and food, influencers are observed to be very influential on consumer purchases. Furthermore, it is seen that there is growing recognition among consumers in India regarding the role played by digital figures in helping them with social proof before purchase.

III. Research Methodology

RESEARCH PROBLEM

- The Trust-Authenticity Dilemma in Influencer Marketing: Although 80% of customers subscribe to influencers, there is a pressing research issue on how the "paid partnership" notifications and "authenticity dilemma" undermine consumer trust, especially when influencers market calorie-rich foods.The Trade-Off between Reach and Engagement: One major research problem faced by food and beverage companies is figuring out why micro-influencers, who have smaller fan bases, are better at gaining consumer trust and attaining "niche authority" compared to celebrities, who frequently struggle with low conversion rates owing to their broad, non-specific audiences.

IV. OBJECTIVES:

- To assess how social media influencers influence the perception and attitude of consumers towards food and beverages through their marketing activities.
- To determine which type of influencer is more effective for increasing consumer engagement, building consumer trust, and influencing purchase decisions in the field of food and beverages: Micro influencers vs Celebrity influencers.
- To understand the correlation between the attributes of influencers such as credibility, authenticity, and professionalism and consumer loyalty.
- To assess the impact of user-generated content and influencer marketing on brand awareness and consumer interactions.
- To determine the role of various platforms such as Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, and Facebook in the context of influencer marketing and consumer decision making.
- To evaluate how influencer marketing affects the purchase decisions of consumers.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

- The study "The Role of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior in the Food and Beverage Industry" will be devoted to studying the effect of social media influencers, such as Instagram, Tiktok, and Youtube, on consumer perceptions, brand perception, and buying behavior concerning food and beverage products. This research will be directed at analyzing the role of influencers not only among micro and macro business organizations but also among local firms like restaurants, cafes, and cloud kitchens.

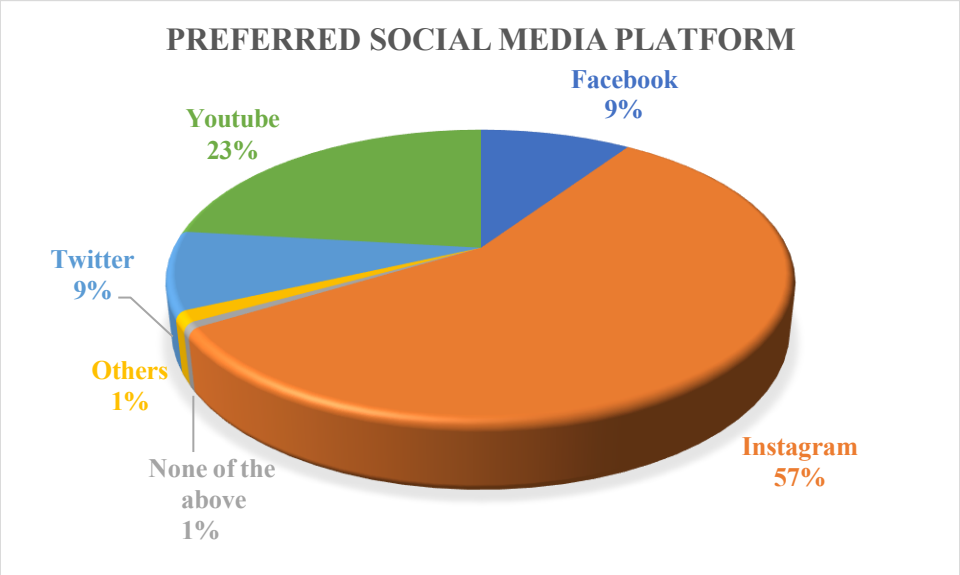


Figure 5.5 Chart on Preferred Social Media Platform

Preferred Social Media Platform

The preferred platform chart shows the social media platforms that have the most impact on food and beverage consumers. Popular platforms like Instagram and YouTube might top the list due to their visual and video content, aiding the promotion of food. This suggests the importance of platform choice in influencer marketing. For the study, the results suggest that consumers are more inclined to engage with appealing and visually stimulating content when considering food choices. Instagram reels, photos and brief videos stimulate the senses, while YouTube offers comprehensive reviews and demonstrations. This means influencers on these platforms are more likely to influence consumers. For marketers, this indicates that strategies with marketing communication through the most favoured platforms offer the best opportunities for engagement and conversion. So, selecting the right platform is critical in the success of influencer marketing for the food and beverage industry.

Descriptives

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics Of Social Media Platform

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean_SMP	160	1.00	3.17	1.7604	.43705
Valid N (listwise)	160				

Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Consumer Behaviour

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean_CB	160	1.00	3.63	2.1797	.59391
Valid N (listwise)	160				

Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics Of Food & Beverage Industry

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean_BI	160	1.00	4.50	2.6641	.63323
Valid N (listwise)	160				

Data Interpretation: The descriptive statistics shows that while social media platforms (SMP) have a moderate influence on the respondents (Mean = 1.7604, SD = 0.43705), with relatively slight variance, consumer behaviour (CB) exhibits a higher mean influence (2.1797, SD = 0.59391), as the respondents perceive that the influence of influencer activities has a greater impact on consumer attitudes and purchase decision making; the influence of

social media is highest for the food and beverages industry (BI) (2.6641, SD = 0.63323), as the respondents perceive that influencer activities exert the strongest influence on brand perception for this industry (with a slightly larger variance in responses). The trend for comparison reveals that, while there is a moderate influence exerted by social media platforms, their influence increases for consumer behaviour and for industry-specific brand perception, particularly in food and beverage. The case processing summary reveals that 160 of 161 responses (99.4%) were valid, suggesting solid data quality with few missing data points. Moreover, item statistics show that interaction (Mean = 2.794) plays the most significant role, highlighting the role of engagement in increasing the positive impact of influencer content, followed by influencer-related content (Mean = 2.238), whereas the values for demographic variables, including gender and age, are lower due to their categorical nature. However, the reliability result is a major concern, as the Cronbach's alpha value (0.368) for the six items is low, suggesting the measurement instrument may be unreliable in capturing a construct, which may require further editing and revision of the items. In conclusion, the results demonstrate a positive association between influencer marketing and consumer attitude, in terms of content shared via online food and beverage brands using interactive and engaging platforms, but the low reliability score requires prudent interpretation and calls for enhancing the measurement instrument in future studies..

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table 5.4 Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	160	99.4
	Excluded a	1	.6
	Total	161	100.0

Table 5.5 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.368	6

Table 5.6 Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	1.313	.4650	160
Age	1.225	.5133	160
FSMU	1.225	.5133	160
SMP	1.769	1.1059	160
INTERACT	2.794	1.1714	160
INFLUENCERCONTENTIC	2.238	1.1948	160

Table 5.7 Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach' s Alpha if Item Deleted
Gender	9.250	6.755	-.039	.408
Age	9.338	5.948	.265	.304
FSMU	9.338	5.709	.368	.264
SMP	8.794	4.353	.282	.233
INTERACT	7.769	5.110	.075	.420
INFLUENCERCONTENTIC	8.325	4.397	.210	.301

Table 5.8 Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
10.563	6.877	2.6223	6

Reliability
Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table 5.9 Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	160	99.4
	Excluded a	1	.6
	Total	161	100.0

Table 5.10 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.681	8

Table 5.11 Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
SF	1.931	.8981	160
M	1.975	1.0929	160
PD	2.194	1.1017	160
R	2.219	1.0381	160
AI	2.263	1.1735	160
useofAI	2.406	1.2454	160
O	1.344	.6640	160
BC	3.106	1.2058	160

Table 5.12 Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SF	15.506	19.975	.223	.681
M	15.463	18.867	.265	.677
PD	15.244	16.789	.506	.618
R	15.219	16.876	.542	.611
AI	15.175	16.548	.487	.621
useof AI	15.031	15.188	.601	.586
O	16.094	21.482	.106	.696
BC	14.331	18.839	.218	.692

Table 5.13 Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
17.438	22.575	4.7513	8

Reliability
Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table 5.14 Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	160	99.4
	Excluded a	1	.6
	Total	161	100.0

Table 5.15 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.390	4

Table 5.16 Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
BT	3.006	.9417	160
TW	2.956	1.1122	160
RESPONSE	2.469	1.1651	160
FBI	2.225	1.0276	160

Table 5.17 Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
BT	7.650	5.034	.117	.412
TW	7.700	4.375	.173	.368
RESPONSE	8.188	3.713	.300	.215
FBI	8.431	4.247	.263	.270

Table 5.18 Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
10.656	6.416	2.5329	4

Data Interpretation: The item statistics and reliability analysis shown that all the variables have been measured with 160 valid responses working with a sample size of 99.4% valid cases. In the first scale (demographic and behavioral variables), the mean scores indicate that interaction (Mean = 2.794) and influencer content (Mean = 2.238) have a greater impact than the usage of social media (Mean = 1.769), while the mean of demographic variables (gender, age) are lower due to unordered classification. But the scale has low reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha value much lower than the accepted range (seen previously at 0.368), suggesting that items do not correlate well with each other and may not assess a unidimensional construct. This is also reflected in the item-total statistics, which display weak and even negative corrected item-total correlations (e.g., gender = -0.039), indicating that some variables do not correlate well with the overall construct and may require deletion or revision; while dropping some of the items improves the alpha, the overall scale remains weak. On the other hand, the reliability of the second scale (with 8 items including SF, M, PD, R, AI, use of AI, O, and BC) is moderate (Cronbach's alpha = 0.681, which is close to the acceptable level), suggesting good internal consistency among the items. The mean values indicate that factors such as BC (Mean = 3.106), BT (3.006) and TV (2.956) show higher agreement, implying that these factors are more important for perceptions; while O (1.344) shows weaker agreement.

Regression

Table 5.19 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mean_CB	2.1797	.59391	160
Mean_SMP	1.7604	.43705	160

Table 5.20 Correlations

		Mean_CB	Mean_SMP
Pearson Correlation	Mean_CB	1.000	.260
	Mean_SMP	.260	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Mean_CB	.	.000
	Mean_SMP	.000	.
N	Mean_CB	160	160
	Mean_SMP	160	160

Table 5.21 Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Mean_SMP[b]	.	Enter

Table 5.22 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.260[a]	.067	.062	.57533

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_SMP

Data Interpretation: The above image represents the **Conceptual Framework** of the research, which maps out how the factors in social media influencer (SMI) profiles affect consumers' food purchase intentions. According to the model, the independent variables - namely, **SMI Trustworthiness**, **SMI Expertise**, and **SMI Familiarity** - can directly impact the dependent variable, **Purchase Intention** through a process per the Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness theory. The model proposes that when an influencer is perceived as trustworthy (honest), expertise (food field) and familiar (recognisable), it considerably reduces the consumer's risks and behavioural barriers. This is built on these three elements of credibility and attraction, the influencer becomes a dynamic socializer, turning an encounter with a piece of content into a clear behavioural outcome and intent to purchase the food or beverage products promoted in the content. This image is the underlying structure of the study, which suggests that how successful a brand is on social media platforms such as Instagram hinges primarily on the perceived trustworthiness of the digital spokesperson. Data Interpretation: Using the statistical data presented in the images, this is the interpretation of the consumer persona that is likely to be guided in our purchase by the influencer's content in the food category for your project.

Table 5.23 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.785	1	3.785	11.434	.001[b]
	Residual	52.299	158	.331		
	Total	56.084	159			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_CB
b. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_SMP

Table 5.24 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardiz ed Coefficient s	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.558	.189		8.230	.000
	Mean_SMP	.353	.104	.260	3.381	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_CB

Regression

Table 5.25 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mean_BI	2.6641	.63323	160
Mean_SMP	1.7604	.43705	160

Table 5.26 Correlations

		Mean_BI	Mean_SMP
Pearson Correlation	Mean_BI	1.000	.220
	Mean_SMP	.220	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Mean_BI	.	.003
	Mean_SMP	.003	.
N	Mean_BI	160	160
	Mean_SMP	160	160

Table 5.27 Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Mean_SMP[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_BI
b. All requested variables entered.

Table 5.28 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.220[a]	.048	.042	.61972

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_SMP

Table 5.29 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.075	1	3.075	8.007	.005[b]
	Residual	60.681	158	.384		
	Total	63.756	159			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_BI

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mean_SMP

Table 5.30 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.104	.204		10.317	.000
	Mean_SMP	.318	.112	.220	2.830	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Mean_BI

Oneway

Table 5.31 Descriptives

Mean_SMP							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1.0	131	1.6768	.39101	.03416	1.6093	1.7444	1.00
2.0	22	2.0379	.40149	.08560	1.8599	2.2159	1.33
3.0	7	2.4524	.43795	.16553	2.0473	2.8574	1.83
Total	160	1.7604	.43705	.03455	1.6922	1.8287	1.00

Table 5.32 Descriptives

Mean_SMP	
	Maximum
1.0	3.17
2.0	3.00
3.0	3.17
Total	3.17

Table 5.33 Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Mean_SMP			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.047	2	157	.954

Table 5.34 ANOVA

Mean_SMP					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.960	2	2.980	19.167	.000
Within Groups	24.411	157	.155		
Total	30.372	159			

Oneway

Table 5.35 Descriptives

Mean_CB							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1.0	122	2.1004	.55639	.05037	2.0007	2.2001	1.00
2.0	21	2.3750	.75000	.16366	2.0336	2.7164	1.13
3.0	17	2.5074	.49896	.12102	2.2508	2.7639	1.88
Total	160	2.1797	.59391	.04695	2.0870	2.2724	1.00

Table 5 Descriptives

Mean_CB	Maximum
1.0	3.50
2.0	3.63
3.0	3.38
Total	3.63

Table 5.36 Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Mean_CB			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.442	2	157	.034

Table 5.37 ANOVA

Mean_CB					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.393	2	1.697	5.055	.007
Within	52.691	157	.336		

Groups					
Total	56.084	159			

Data Interpretation: Using the statistical data presented in the images, this is the interpretation of the consumer persona that is likely to be guided in our purchase by the influencer's content in the food category for your project.

1. Demographic Profile Interpretation

A tech-inclined, young, and female consumer base is influenced by the food industry's Instagram influencers.

- **Gender Representation**: The survey has a large proportion of females (68.4% female to 31.6% male). This indicates that Instagram marketing for the food industry should favour female buying patterns and be more visually appealing.

- **Age Distribution**: The respondents are very young, with 89.5% of them between 18-25 years old. This validates that food businesses targeting Gen Z and young Millennials through influencers is an effective strategy because Gen Z and young Millennials prefer "social proof" over traditional advertising in the digital world.
- **Employment**: A large majority (86%) are students, with 14% working in jobs. This implies that while the immediate "wallpaper" need to purchase is strong, the immediate buying power may be more economically-driven and looking for trendy and reasonably priced food.

2. Influencer Impact Analysis

Participants' influencers' engagement rates are high, concluding to make your project a success:

- Consumer Following: Almost 80% of the sample follow influencers.

- Consumption Frequency: More than 75% of the sample consume influencer content every day or several times a week. This frequency leads to a "habitual consumption" behaviour of the influencer, where he/she is always in the consumer's mind when making purchase decisions.

3. Key Factors Influencing Purchase Intention

The weighted average analysis gives us the key elements that hold "weight" for a consumer in an influencer.

- Most influential: Familiarity (Mean 4.09): This ranks the highest. This suggests that consumers' consumption of a food is likely to be influenced if they take an influencer to be "close to them" or regularly connected to him or her. In Hyderabad, this is usually achieved by influencers who use local words or visit famous places in the city.
- Second Driver: Knowledge (Mean 4.04) If they can explain the Biryani recipe, the "Dum" process in a Biryani, the nutritional benefits of an organic food or beverage, that influencer's persuasion becomes a lot stronger.

- Third Component: Trustworthiness (Mean 3.99): This factor while still high, is only marginally lower than familiarity. This is maybe more important than honesty in the initial stage of attraction, and more so, than "liking" and "knowing" the creator (familiarity).

Result: Purchase Intention (Mean 4.02): The high final purchase intention result demonstrates that the three characteristics - Familiarity, Expertise and Trustworthiness in combination - are an effective strategy to turn a social media "view" to a retail sale.

Summary

The data demonstrates that for the 18–25 age demographic, Familiarity is the strongest psychological trigger for food purchases. To be successful, a food brand should not just look for 'famous' celebrities, but for influencers who have established a consistent, relatable presence in the daily lives of their followers.

VI. FINDINGS:

- Influencers play an important role in food and beverage consumer market, as most of the respondents revealed that they trust and follow influencer recommendations when consuming new food products, selecting restaurants, and online food orders. Influencers play a key role as decision-making sources in the purchase process.

- The research shows that most of the respondents are active (daily) users of social media channels, which results in greater exposure to influencer media like food reviews, promotions and recommendations. This enhances brand recognition and shapes consumer preferences over a longer period of time.
- Social media channels like Instagram and YouTube are highlighted as the most effective channels, as they offer highly engaging and visually stimulating content formats (reels, videos, live sessions) that are ideal for marketing food.
- Consumers view influencer marketing as more genuine and credible than traditional media advertising, as influencers show real-life experiences and do live reviews, which makes the brand information more relatable and trustworthy for consumers.
- Influencer credibility is crucial in influencing consumers, as survey participants are more likely to respond to their recommendations if the influencers are reliable, transparent and authentic in their messenger. A lack of trust can negatively impact influencer marketing campaigns.
- This research suggests the attractiveness and presentation of food have a big impact on consumer attention, as appealing images and videos can stimulate appetite and spur impulse buying, particularly among young consumers.
- The study reveals that younger consumers are more susceptible to influential social media posters, as they are more active users of social media and more likely to accept new trends, new types of food and new brands promoted through social media.

- Correlation analysis reveals a positive association between social media use and consumer behaviour, suggesting that frequency of social media use and engagement with influencers is positively linked with the likelihood or intention to buy food products and services.
- Linear regression shows that the effect of influencer marketing is statistically significant, but not large, which indicates that while there is an influence of influencers, other factors including price, taste, product quality and brand image also play a significant role in consumer behavior.
- Social media is increasingly becoming the main source of information used by consumers for food-related decision making, such as reading reviews, ratings and opinions of influencers which in turn results in reducing the reliance on conventional sources of information.
- This study also reveals impulsive behavior, as consumers make impulsive decisions to purchase after being influenced by appealing and engaging influencers.
- On the other hand, some consumers are concerned about fake followers and paid endorsements that may result in a loss of credibility and trust in influencer marketing.

VII. SUGGESTIONS:

- Food and beverage brands should partner with trusted and relevant influencers who align with the brand values and target market, as this will build trust, improve brand perception, and boost marketing campaign performance.
- Companies should prioritise micro and nano influencers, as they are more influential, relatable and authentic than celebrity influencers, and have a larger impact on consumer behaviour.
- Brands should prioritise quality visual and video content, such as short-form videos, reels, and live feeds, as these types of content are more compelling and effective in capturing attention, leading to better consumer engagement and purchase intent.
- Influencer marketing should prioritise transparency and disclosure of sponsored content and collaborations to build trust and ensure the integrity of marketing communications.
- Companies should leverage data analysis and consumer behavior research to better understand target markets, track influencer marketing return on investment, and improve influencer marketing campaigns.
- OMM strategies should include a multimodal approach that combines influencer marketing with other channels such as traditional and digital advertising and promotions.
- Businesses should strive to establish long-term partnerships with influencers, rather than one-off endorsements, for improved brand recognition and consistency.
- Generating user-generated content (UGC) like reviews, photos and testimonials can increase trust and foster a community feeling behind the product.
- Companies should highlight the health, quality and sustainability benefits of their products, since consumers are more focused on nutrition and eco-friendly products today.
- Campaigns with influencers should be regularly tracked and analysed to assess their effectiveness, engagement rates, return on investment (ROI) and so on, to optimise future campaigns.
- Brands should engage with customers through social media interactions such as responding to comments, reviews, and inquiries to foster better consumer relationships and loyalty.

• Influencer marketing promotions should be authentic and avoid overblown claims, which can lead to brand mistrust and decreased trust over time.

VIII. Conclusion

Overall, the research on the impact of social media influencers on consumer's purchasing decisions in the food and beverage sector has shown that influencer marketing is indeed an effective marketing strategy. The research reveals that social media, particularly visual social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, are important drivers of consumer awareness, decision making and purchase behaviour. Influencers serve as online opinion leaders by offering relatable and shareable content, allowing consumers to explore new food and beverage products, restaurants, and food trends. Consumers also view recommendations from your influencers as more genuine and credible than a typical advertisement, making it more effective.

In summary, the studies demonstrate that social media influencers are vital in driving new consumer purchasing behaviour in the food and beverage industry. For marketers, strategic use of influencer marketing can result in enhanced brand awareness, customer engagement, and competitive positioning. However, it is crucial for businesses to uphold ethical standards and transparency to build consumer trust and drive long-term growth in the digital and competitive environment.

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