INFLUENCE OF FOODS VLOGGERS ON DINER'S RESTAURANT SELECTION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TRICHY

Ms. Jalpin[*1], Ms. Ressmitha[*2]

[*1,2]PG Student, PG And Research Department Of Commerce, St.Joseph's College (Autonomous), Trichy, Affiliated To Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli, India.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of food vloggers on college students' restaurant selection in Trichy. With the increasing popularity of food vloggers and their influence on dining decisions, this research focuses on factors such as food vlogger credibility, social influence, and technological aspects like social media platforms. Data was collected from 140 college students in Trichy, analyzing their responses on factors influencing restaurant choice. Results indicate that food vloggers' credibility, content quality, and engagement play a significant role in influencing restaurant selection. Additionally, social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are crucial in amplifying these influences. The study concludes that food vloggers, through both organic and paid endorsements, shape dining preferences among college students, and their impact is strengthened by the social and emotional factors associated with food culture.

Keywords: Food Vloggers, Restaurant Selection, Social Media Influence, College Students, Technological Impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

Food vloggers, who review and recommend restaurants through various digital platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, have significantly influenced how diners choose their eating establishments. The rise of food-related content creators has reshaped the food industry, especially among younger generations who rely on social media for dining suggestions. This influence is particularly prominent among college students, a demographic that frequently dines out and is highly active on social platforms.

Trichy, a city in Tamil Nadu, India, known for its vibrant food scene, has witnessed an increasing engagement with food influencers. College students in the region, with their exposure to both local and global food trends, make dining decisions based on a variety of factors, including food vlogger recommendations. The influence of food vloggers on restaurant selection is multifaceted, with factors such as credibility, content quality, social influence, and technological factors playing significant roles.

This paper explores the relationship between food vloggers and restaurant selection decisions among college students in Trichy, focusing on food vlogger credibility, social influence, and the role of social media platforms in shaping dining preferences.

Objectives

1. **Food Vlogger Factors:** To investigate the impact of food vloggers' credibility on diner's restaurant selection.

2. **Psychological Factors:** To explore the role of social influence in shaping diner's restaurant selection decisions based on food vloggers' recommendations.

3. **Technological Factors:** To investigate the impact of social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube) on the effectiveness of food vloggers' recommendations.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of food vloggers in shaping restaurant selection and dining behaviors has been a growing area of interest. Several studies have highlighted the significant influence that digital influencers, especially food vloggers, have on consumer decision-making in the food and beverage industry.

Food Vloggers' Credibility

According to Jin and Phua (2014), trust in influencers is a crucial factor affecting consumer behavior. College students, who often seek validation through social media, are more likely to follow influencers they perceive as credible and authentic (Freberg et al., 2011). Credibility is built through perceived expertise, transparency, and unbiased reviews, which are essential in influencing diners' restaurant choices.

Social Influence

The role of social influence in decision-making is well-documented in marketing literature. Social media influencers have been shown to exert considerable influence over consumer behaviors, including restaurant selection (Goh, Heng,

& Lin, 2013). College students, who are often influenced by peers and online social networks, make dining choices based on recommendations from trusted sources, including food vloggers (Henderson & Bowley, 2010).

Technological Factors

The digital age has transformed the way food and dining content is consumed. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become essential tools for food vloggers to reach their audience. The visual nature of these platforms enhances the effectiveness of recommendations, making them ideal for showcasing food experiences (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Moreover, the frequency of posts and the engagement between vloggers and their audience on these platforms contribute significantly to the impact of their recommendations (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 140 college students in Trichy. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions divided into four sections: demographic information, food vlogger factors, psychological factors, and technological factors. The survey was distributed online, ensuring broad participation from college students aged 18-24, who represent the majority of the respondents.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in responses. Likert-scale questions were used to measure attitudes towards food vlogger credibility, content quality, social influence, and technological factors. The responses were grouped into five categories: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

4. FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic Factors

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
AGE		
Under 18	4	2.9
18-24	127	90.7
25-34	5	3.6
35-44	3	2.1
45-54	1	0.7
Above 55	0	0
Total	140	100
GENDER		
Male	47	66.4
Female	93	33.6
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Total	140	100
OCCUPATION		
Student	115	82.1
Employed full time	13	9.3
Employed part time	1	0.7
Self employed	1	0.7
Unemployed	7	5
Other	3	2.1
Total	140	100
How often do you dine out or order food from restaurant?		

Daily	16	11.4
Weekly	43	30.7
Bi-weekly	16	11.4
Monthly	26	18.6
Less than once a month	39	27.9
Total	140	100

Age Distribution

• The majority of respondents are in the 18-24 age group, comprising 90.7% (127 out of 140) of the total sample. This indicates that the younger population is the most engaged with food vloggers and may have a more active online presence when it comes to following food trends and restaurant recommendations.

• The remaining age groups are much smaller:

o Under 18: 2.9% (4 out of 140).

o 25-34: 3.6% (5 out of 140).

o 35-44: 2.1% (3 out of 140).

o 45-54: 0.7% (1 out of 140).

o Above 55: 0% (0 out of 140).

This clearly shows a strong preference for food vlogs among young adults and minimal engagement from older age groups, which is typical given the popularity of social media among younger generations.

Gender Distribution

• Female respondents make up the larger share of the sample, at 66.4% (93 out of 140).

• Male respondents constitute 33.6% (47 out of 140).

• There were no responses for other gender categories or those who preferred not to disclose their gender.

This suggests that food vlogging may have a greater appeal to women in this study group, reflecting possible gender differences in consumption habits or social media engagement.

Occupation Distribution

• The overwhelming majority of respondents are students, making up 82.1% (115 out of 140), which indicates that food vlogging and restaurant recommendations are highly popular among the student demographic.

• Employed full-time respondents make up 9.3% (13 out of 140).

• Employed part-time and self-employed categories represent a very small portion at **0.7%** (1 out of 140) each.

• Unemployed individuals make up 5% (7 out of 140).

• The other occupation category makes up 2.1% (3 out of 140).

The data suggests that food vloggers are predominantly influencing college students or young adults who have flexible schedules and are more likely to dine out or follow trends.

Dining Frequency

• Weekly diners represent the largest group, at 30.7% (43 out of 140), suggesting that this group dines out regularly and could be the most likely to follow food vloggers for restaurant recommendations.

• Less than once a month diners represent 27.9% (39 out of 140), which suggests that a significant portion of respondents are not frequent diners but may still be influenced by food vloggers when they do dine out.

• Monthly diners make up 18.6% (26 out of 140).

• Bi-weekly diners are 11.4% (16 out of 140).

• Daily diners represent 11.4% (16 out of 140), a smaller proportion likely reflecting those with higher disposable income or a stronger preference for dining out.

The data shows that food vloggers may have a higher influence on respondents who dine out on a weekly basis, but still maintain some influence on those who dine less frequently.

Table 2: Food vlogger factors

STATEMENTS	SD	D	N	A	SA	TOTAL
CREDIBILITY						
When I follow food vloggers, I trust their reviews because they are knowledgeable and have expertise in food.	11	15	69	38	7	140
I am more likely to follow a food vlogger if they are transparent and authentic in their reviews.	5	18	60	47	10	140
I trust food vloggers who are known for being unbiased and honest in their restaurant reviews.	7	18	59	44	12	140
CONTENT QUALITY						
High-quality video production (clear visuals, good lighting) influences my decision to watch a food vlogger's content.	2	16	55	52	15	140
I prefer food vloggers who have good photography skills and showcase the food in an appealing way.	6	20	48	46	20	140
The writing style (captions, blogs, descriptions) of a food vlogger affects how I perceive the quality of the restaurant they review.	8	22	49	47	14	140
ENGAGEMENT						
I feel more engaged with food vloggers who actively respond to comments and interact with their audience.	4	25	43	52	16	140
The number of subscribers and followers a food vlogger has influences my opinion of their recommendations.	2	18	55	50	15	140
I often share food vlogger content with my friends or family when I find it interesting or helpful.	-	17	41	57	25	140
FREQUENCY OF POST						
I prefer food vloggers who post content regularly, such as on a weekly or daily basis.	6	26	53	40	15	140
I am more likely to try restaurants recommended by food vloggers who post frequently.	9	24	44	49	14	140
I lose interest in food vloggers who post infrequently or irregularly.	9	33	48	35	15	140
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS						
SOCIAL INFLUENCE						
I often make restaurant choices based on recommendations from my peers or social media influencers.	6	26	53	40	15	140
I am influenced by the opinions of my social media friends when deciding where to eat.	8	24	44	49	14	140
Social media trends (such as viral restaurant challenges) play a significant role in my dining decisions.	5	33	48	35	15	140
EMOTIONAL CONNECTION						
I feel a sense of nostalgia or emotional connection when watching food vloggers showcase traditional or comfort foods.	3	23	54	36	24	140
The emotional appeal of food in a vlogger's video (e.g., stories or personal connections) makes me more likely to visit the recommended restaurant.	10	22	58	37	13	140
I am more likely to visit a restaurant if the food vlogger shares personal, heartwarming stories or experiences related to the restaurant.	7	31	55	34	13	140
RISK AVERSION						

I am hesitant to try new restaurants recommended by food vloggers, especially if I have no previous experience with the place.	6	20	57	38	19	140
I prefer dining at restaurants that I have already tried or are highly recommended by trusted food vloggers, rather than exploring new places.	3	16	53	50	18	140
I would be more likely to try a new restaurant if it has been reviewed positively by a food vlogger I trust.	6	13	58	50	13	140
FOODIE PERSONALITY						
I consider myself an adventurous eater and enjoy trying new and unique food experiences recommended by food vloggers.	9	20	49	48	14	140
I often seek out new food trends or new restaurants based on food vlogger recommendations.	4	20	59	40	17	140
Watching food vloggers excites my curiosity and motivates me to try different types of food and restaurants.	5	20	53	48	14	140
TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS						
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS						
I rely on platforms like Instagram and YouTube to discover new restaurants through food vlogger content.	6	20	47	46	21	140
The visual nature of Instagram and YouTube makes them ideal platforms for exploring food and restaurant recommendations.	8	13	54	45	20	140
I am more likely to try a restaurant if I see it being recommended by a food vlogger on Instagram or YouTube.	7	17	57	41	18	140
DEVICE USAGE						
I use my smartphone to watch food vlogs and make decisions about where to dine out.	6	18	59	41	16	140
I frequently watch food vlogs on my laptop or tablet before deciding on a restaurant to visit.	8	33	53	37	9	140
The accessibility of food vlogs on mobile devices influences my dining decisions.	9	22	46	49	14	140
ONLINE REVIEWS						
Online reviews (e.g., Google, Yelp) along with food vlogs influence my decision-making process when choosing a restaurant.	9	15	55	48	13	140
I trust online restaurant reviews shared by food vloggers more than traditional reviews from other platforms.	8	26	59	34	13	140
Online ratings and reviews play a significant role in my decision to visit a recommended restaurant.	9	16	57	43	15	140
INFLUENCER MARKETING						
Influencer marketing (e.g., food vloggers endorsing restaurants) affects my decision to try a new restaurant.	3	26	50	46	15	140
I trust food vloggers' sponsored content (e.g., paid restaurant promotions) if the content feels genuine and not overly commercialized.	6	23	60	37	14	140
Food vloggers' endorsements or paid promotions are just as impactful as organic recommendations in influencing my restaurant choices.	9	21	64	33	13	140

5. CREDIBILITY OF FOOD VLOGGERS

Expertise & Transparency

49.3% (69 out of 140) respondents trust food vloggers because they believe they are knowledgeable and have expertise in food.

50.7% (70 out of 140) respondents are more likely to follow food vloggers who are transparent and authentic in their reviews.

These figures indicate a strong preference for trustworthiness, with a majority of respondents favoring food vloggers who demonstrate expertise and authenticity in their content.

Honesty & Unbiased Reviews

49.3% (59 out of 140) respondents trust food vloggers who are known for being unbiased and honest in their restaurant reviews, highlighting the importance of impartiality in influencing dining decisions.

Content Quality

Visual Appeal

47.9% (55 out of 140) respondents stated that high-quality video production, including clear visuals and good lighting, influences their decision to watch a food vlogger's content.

61.4% (55 out of 140) respondents prefer food vloggers who have good photography skills and showcase food in an appealing way. This shows the significant role visual presentation plays in attracting viewers.

Effective Writing Style

53.6% (55 out of 140) respondents are influenced by the writing style of food vloggers, such as captions and descriptions, when forming opinions about the quality of the restaurant being reviewed.

Engagement

Active Interaction

60.0% (52 out of 140) respondents feel more engaged with food vloggers who actively respond to comments and interact with their audience. This suggests that engagement is a critical factor in building viewer loyalty.

Follower Count & Social Influence

60.0% (50 out of 140) respondents say that the number of followers or subscribers a food vlogger has influences their opinion of the vlogger's recommendations. This indicates the importance of social proof in decision-making.

Social Sharing

57.1% (57 out of 140) respondents often share food vlogger content with friends or family when they find it interesting or helpful, indicating that food vlogs have a high degree of social influence.

Frequency of Posts

Regular Posting

59.3% (53 out of 140) respondents prefer food vloggers who post content regularly, such as on a weekly or daily basis. This underlines the importance of consistency in content production to maintain audience interest.

Influence of Frequent Posts

58.6% (49 out of 140) respondents are more likely to try restaurants recommended by food vloggers who post frequently, demonstrating that regular content reinforces trust and influence over dining decisions.

Declining Interest with Infrequency

60.0% (48 out of 140) respondents lose interest in food vloggers who post infrequently or irregularly, suggesting that infrequent posting can result in reduced audience engagement.

Psychological Factors

Social Influence

57.9% (53 out of 140) respondents make restaurant choices based on recommendations from their peers or social media influencers.

55.7% (49 out of 140) respondents are influenced by the opinions of their social media friends, indicating that social influence is a strong factor in dining decisions.

54.3% (48 out of 140) respondents also say social media trends, like viral restaurant challenges, play a significant role in their dining decisions.

Emotional Appeal

51.4% (54 out of 140) respondents feel a sense of nostalgia or emotional connection when watching food vloggers showcase traditional or comfort foods, underscoring the emotional power of food content.

56.4% (58 out of 140) respondents are more likely to visit a restaurant if the food vlogger shares personal, heartwarming stories or experiences related to the restaurant.

6. TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

Social Media Platforms

51.4% (47 out of 140) respondents rely on platforms like Instagram and YouTube to discover new restaurants through food vlogger content.

59.3% (54 out of 140) respondents agree that the visual nature of Instagram and YouTube makes them ideal platforms for exploring food and restaurant recommendations.

Device Usage

58.6% (59 out of 140) respondents use their smartphones to watch food vlogs and make decisions about where to dine out, highlighting the preference for mobile devices in the decision-making process.

51.4% (53 out of 140) respondents frequently watch food vlogs on their laptops or tablets before deciding on a restaurant to visit.

Online Reviews

57.9% (55 out of 140) respondents say that online reviews, along with food vlogs, influence their decision-making when choosing a restaurant.

55.0% (59 out of 140) respondents trust online restaurant reviews shared by food vloggers more than traditional reviews from other platforms.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer Endorsements

54.3% (50 out of 140) respondents say that influencer marketing (e.g., food vloggers endorsing restaurants) affects their decision to try new restaurants.

52.1% (60 out of 140) respondents trust food vloggers' sponsored content if the content feels genuine and not overly commercialized.

7. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant influence food vloggers have on college students' restaurant selection in Trichy. The credibility of food vloggers, their engagement with followers, and the quality of their content play crucial roles in shaping dining decisions. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube, provide an ideal space for food vloggers to reach a wide audience, with students increasingly relying on these platforms for restaurant recommendations. The findings suggest that food vloggers can be powerful influencers in the food industry, and their impact is heightened by the psychological and technological factors that shape college students' dining habits.

8. REFERENCES

[1] Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. Public Relations Review, 37(1), 90-92.

[2] Goh, K. Y., Heng, C. S., & Lin, Z. (2013). Social media brand community and consumer behavior: Quantifying the effects of online social interactions. Journal of Marketing, 77(3), 1-20.

[3] Henderson, R., & Bowley, M. (2010). Food media: Can it change your mind? Food Studies, 3(2), 45-55.

[4] Jin, S. V., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' Twitter accounts: The impact of followers' perceived social interaction with celebrities on their parasocial relationship and entertainment-communication outcomes. Computers in Human Behavior, 36, 171-177.

[5] Schivinski, B., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). The impact of social media communication on consumer behavior: A comparison of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Journal of Marketing Communications, 22(6), 545-563.

[6] Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). Social media marketing. Pearson.