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Dissertation

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**An exploration of the issues and challenges of Social
Media influencer Marketing: strategies and
effectiveness**

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how star marketing on social media changes the way people act in the food business. As part of a detailed research method, the study keeps track of, looks at, and records many aspects of influencer marketing tactics to discover how they impact people's decisions to buy food. Fifty people from different backgrounds in London were chosen at random using a method that is not based on chance. This gave us a close look at what the community thought.

Aside from Microsoft Forms-made web polls, other sources were also read to get a full picture of the subject. With theme analysis in Microsoft Word and quantitative analysis in Excel, it was easier to find patterns, trends, and links in the data. A mixed-method approach is used in the study to make the results more dependable and complete. This means that both first-hand and second-hand sources are used. The study looks at two different times over ten weeks to see how social media trends and customer habits change. Priority was given to ethical issues like informed consent, data privacy, and openness throughout the whole process to protect the rights of the people who took part in the study and make sure it was honest. Analysis of the survey data reveals significant insights into current social media marketing strategies implemented in the food industry, with a particular emphasis on the dominance of influencer marketing. The findings highlight the ethical challenges associated with influencer marketing, including issues of transparency, authenticity, and trust. Furthermore, the research elucidates the impact of these marketing strategies on consumer behavior, emphasizing the role of influencers in shaping purchasing decisions.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of influencer marketing in the food industry's social media strategy while advocating for ethical marketing practices. Recommendations for future research include broader sampling, mixed-method approaches, and longitudinal studies to further explore the dynamic relationship between social media marketing tactics and consumer behavior. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding influencer marketing in the food industry and underscores the need for transparency and ethical conduct in marketing practices. The survey results serve important new things about how the food business markets itself on social media and how important people are to that marketing. The results bring up moral problems that influencer marketing does, such as trust, being honest, and being open. The study also talks

about how different marketing tactics can change the way customers act and how strong influences are in deciding what to buy. The study's findings back up honest marketing and show how important influencer marketing is to the social media strategy of the food business.

To find out how the link between social media marketing strategies and customer behaviour changes over time, it will help to do a longer-term study with a wider range of methods and a bigger sample size. This study adds to what we already know about how complicated influencer marketing can be in the food business. It also shows how important it is for marketing tactics to be honest and moral.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research is to build an effective source of knowledge regarding the topic “An exploration of the issues and challenges of Social Media influencer Marketing: strategies, effectiveness, and ethical considerations”. As it is now known to all social media is currently one of the most used and highly important platforms that is being used in multiple industries in a multifaceted way.

From posting engaging pictures, videos, content, advertisements, and reels to harnessing influencer marketing to reach out to the followers of social media influencers, similar to all other industries the food industry is now using all these means of reaching out to its potential customers. Huge resources are being spent on influencer marketing and other social media marketing strategies for this reason.

However, the strategies of social media marketing have already unraveled a multitude of issues just as significant as the opportunities it has offered and continues to offer. From misleading information about food products and their ingredients, to a lack of knowledge among the influencers about the food contents making customers question the authenticity of this means of marketing, challenges related to the strategies are a concern.

Thus the dissertation aims at a comprehensive discussion of the exploration of issues and challenges related to social media influencer marketing, while at the same time, it will also discuss the potential strategies, effectiveness, and ethical considerations of the same in the food industry.

Due to increasing the number of social media platforms it should be mentioned that companies are working with social media influencers because they see this as a new way to connect with their potential consumers. Moreover, companies need to take into consideration new marketing strategies and statements such as consumer value and relationship not just sales and profit. So, nowadays famous celebrities have a bigger and more significant influence on consumer purchasing decision than typical advertising methods, which also has been mentioned in this research (Masuda, Han and Lee, 2022).

Also, this study has been done to evaluate the current social media marketing strategies in the food industry and the impact on consumer behavior.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is now well known that companies use social media influencer marketing to connect with buyers online. Haenlein et al., (2020, p.5-25) talk about how celebrity marketing is changing on Instagram and TikTok. They stress how important it is to know how to get around in these new places.

Still, Coates et al. (2020, p.449) raise worries about the moral impacts of influencer marketing, especially since kids are easily moved by the content that influencers promote. It can be very hard and difficult to use influential people to get things done.

Further, artificial intelligence has the potential to revolutionise social media influencer marketing by analysing large amounts of data, including demographic data, consumer behaviours, and preferences. Artificial intelligence algorithms are able to find patterns and insights that guide campaign strategies through the analysis of real-time interaction and historical data. With the help of this predictive capability, brands can stay ahead of the curve and produce content that appeals to the changing tastes of their audience.

Consumer behaviour and decision-making have changed over the past few years by technological advancements and are now major subjects in the marketing. It should be noted that social media platforms have a significance influence on consumer behavior.

Due to the increasing number of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok consumer behavior reflects an active relationship between technological innovation and changing social value that involves consumer preferences shipping, and the way people shop interact with brands and make purchasing decisions.

The consumer purchasing decision process as we know depends on some stages and always starts with the recognition of consumers' needs and wants that can impact the decision-making process such as internal factors (thirst or consumer experience) and external factors such as advertising, retailers, Internet, social influence, friends recommendation and ect.

Consumers frequently make routine purchases of low-cost items, such as bread, milk, eggs, relying on routine response behavior. They spend less time deciding and don't need to study reviews or consult friends for their views.

However, consumer behavior changes when consumers decide to buy expensive and unfamiliar products. They need to allocate more time to decide which brand to choose and compare factors such as product availability, prices, promotions, and personal preferences that will influence the purchasing decision (Hemachandran K and Rodriguez, 2023).

Besides this, businesses can better meet the needs and preferences of their customers at every stage by customizing their marketing strategies, goods on sale, and interactions with consumers based on an understanding of the consumer purchasing decision process.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Social media influencer marketing is growing in importance for brands and businesses, so this study was made. While Ye et al. (2021, p.160) talk about the pros of influencer marketing for businesses, they mostly talk about how it can help create brand groups and get more people involved with a brand.

Another thing Yesiloglu and Costello, (2020, p.14) say about how important influencer marketing is to modern marketing is that it helps create brand groups and gets people to take part. People are using influencer marketing more and more, but not a lot is known about how well it works or what moral issues it brings up.

This study wants to fill in these gaps by looking closely at the methods, results, and moral effects of social media celebrity marketing. It will be useful for both academics and people who work in the field.

Moreover, this study wants to find out different things about social media influencer marketing, like how it changes how people act, whether it's fair, and how well the tactics used work. Even though influencer marketing is becoming more popular, not enough people understand how it works and what effects it has on many platforms. So that the right things are done, the moral effects of influencer marketing need to be carefully thought through. This is especially important when it comes to kids and other vulnerable groups. This study tries to think critically about these problems so that students and business people can learn useful things.

In the last few years, social media influencer marketing has changed consumer behavior considerably. Nowadays influencers from different platforms have high power in shaping consumers' behavior, preferences, and their purchasing decision processes due to influencers' content creation and the trust that they make on these platforms.

The research is useful because by understanding social media influencer marketing, companies, and many industries can attract more target audiences via interactive approaches. In addition, minimizing cost by providing a direct channel for brands and their audience. At the same time, there are some issues and challenges in today's digital world that have been explored in this research.

Also, Vrontis et al. (2021) have examined marketing techniques implemented by social media influencer marketing and came to the conclusion that to engage with target audience and achieve marketing goals, companies should identify the right influencers align to the specific brand and therefore will have a big impact on consumers. So, it can be challenging to find the right influencers that will have a connection to the brands and the same time have connections with the target audience.

1.3 AIMS, OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Aim:

The main aim of this research is to explore the opportunities and challenges of social media influencer Marketing.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the research include:

- To determine the current social media marketing strategies implemented in the food industry.

- To analyse the opportunities and challenges of implementing social media marketing strategies in the food industry.
- To investigate the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer behaviour.

Research Questions:

- What are the current social media Marketing strategies implemented in the food industry?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing social media Marketing strategies in the industry?
- What is the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer behaviour?

1.4 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, it is talked about how important social media influencer marketing is in today's business world, especially in the food industry. This chapter begins with an introduction, and background of the research, where the background information about the significance of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour has been discussed. Then the rationale of the study is provided to justify the purpose of the research. Furthermore, the research aim, objectives, and research questions are also presented in this chapter, along with an overview of each chapter of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review analyses social media marketing focusing on influencer marketing in the food industry. This review also talks about current strategies, changes, problems and effects. This chapter includes the summarised information about social media influencer marketing and consumer behavior, and also has provided the critical analysis of different views from authors on the same topic area. In addition, this literature review also talks about the influence of influencer marketing and the theories behind the Honeycomb Model and Race Model. This review also highlights the literature gap that needs to be addressed and the methods to fix problems.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the whole plan used to look into research methodology. The philosophy, approach also research design are described in this chapter. All steps of the “research onion” have been applied to build a research design for the dissertation and to get the data collection and analysis that have also been described in the chapter. Moreover, the ethical considerations that research has been followed were explained at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is all about data analysis and discussion of the result of the collected information. In addition, the accumulated data has been critically analysed and discussed in the chapter. The study's results make it clear that food companies should use influencer marketing as part of their social media plans. When it works, open methods and a variety of strategies are still needed to deal with social issues. There is an ethical side to marketing choices in the food business that needs to know about sustainable marketing well.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This is the last chapter of the research where the study has been concluded and recommendations have been given. In addition, a discussion of how important influencer marketing is to the food industry's social media strategy and a list of the pros and cons of this approach have been developed. Moreover, future scope of the research has been discussed. People need to trust to stay in the digital marketing world, which is always change. So, more study should be done to fix the issues and help people understand better this phenomenon.

Figure 1 below, represents a research structure of the dissertation with all chapters presented.

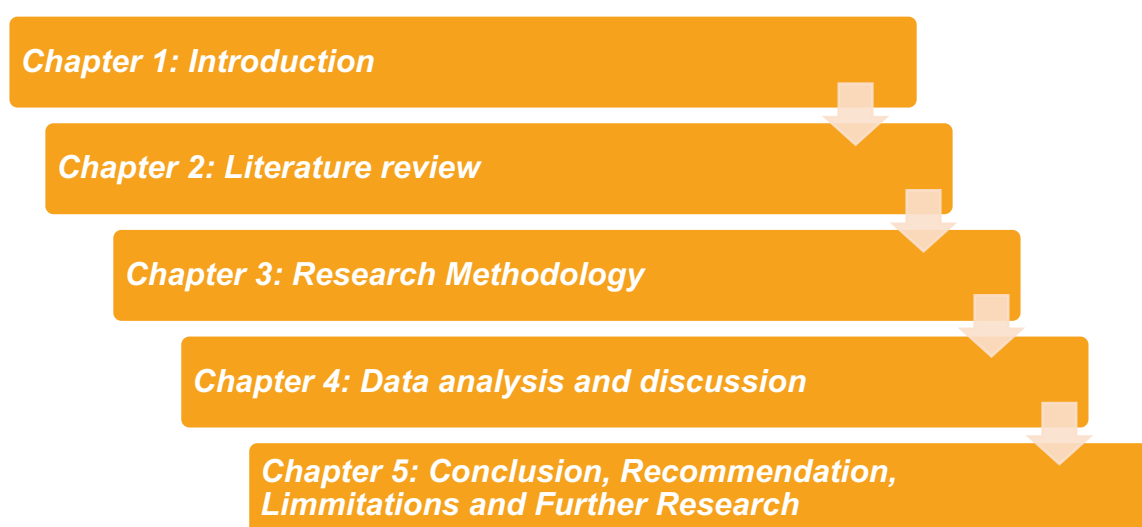


Figure 1. Research structure with the chapters

(Source: created by the author)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the literature review of the specific topic which is social media influencer marketing and consumer behavior in the food industry. Influencer marketing has become a popular way for brands to connect with their customers with the latest trend of social media culture and increasing social media sites. A literature review represents an overview and critical analysis of a specific topic that diverse authors have written. In addition, it helps researchers to understand existing published materials and focus on their own research questions and objectives (Saunders, 2016, p.79).

The present study will help to understand the importance of influencer marketing in this digital era. In addition, this review will help to have an idea about the difficulties or complications of social media marketing strategies especially when it comes to the food and beverages industry. This literature review will analyse the various models, theories, trends, opportunities, and challenges related to the research topic.

2.2 DEFINING SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

THE MEANING OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING is made possible by the internet and social media platforms that people are using every day. Moreover, social media has a big impact on consumer behaviour as research has shown that every user has eight diverse social media platforms and spends more than 1 hour daily. Also, the expansion influence of social media continues to grow (Tuten, 2023).

Market – oriented industries such as beauty and fashion have a higher return on equity than industries with low marketing orientation, nowadays it becomes easy to increase market orientation via social media platforms (Zhang and Song, 2022, p.69).

According to Boy and Uitermark (2022, p.30) understanding social media as a site of request necessitates more than a description of individual decisions. Additionally, we must view social media as an instrument of duties, necessitating an examination of content, emotions, and

varieties. We also should measure up the evaluation beyond interactions that occur in person. This requires not only taking into account for the opportunities of social media as a system of society and technology, but also comprehending the "networks of solutions" that influence the economy to which individuals are attracted.

In contrast to the understanding Krijnen et al. (2022) explanation of the importance of social media influencer marketing compared to earlier times, social networks enable most of us to engage with friends in new ways, explore the world, new restaurants, buy things and test our identities. Therefore, social networks offer a unique viewpoint from which to observe social change and the shifting dynamics of relationships that cross social media platforms.

Moreover, social media offers numerous advantages for marketing such as promoting products and brands, making products and services visible, etc. So, now we have a new culture of connectivity with friends and community, and it is hard to imagine a world without social media, which has the power to keep people online, build networks, and scroll the Internet.

Besides that, the author Couldry (2022, p.14) hopes to develop an understanding about social media and said that over a decade after the advent of social media and fast internet connections, we are entering a new phase of data-driven social order evolution where social media has been collected a huge number of consumer data such as data of birth, emails, names, and addresses.

However, social media has a deep relationship and influence on users' daily lives, where people can find support, entertainment, information and at the same time, companies can easily communicate and manipulate consumer behaviour by implementing marketing strategies.

THE MEANING OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), actions and decision-making processes people take when buying goods or services are referred to as consumer behaviour. These decisions can be affected by a variety of external as well as internal variables, such as norms in society, economic circumstances, individual preferences, and business marketing strategies such as company advertising. In other words, consumer behavior can be manipulated by numerous factors, also their needs and perceptions.

During the pandemic time caused by COVID-19, consumers have changed their behavior considerably, first of all, people do online shopping more than in person and it becomes less time spent. The second thing is socio-cultural factors that influence consumer behavior, “panic buying” in that case, consumers started to buy in huge quantities essential products. However, this kind of behavior is caused by critical situations that have impact on consumption and supply. According to Muñoz-Chávez, García-Contreras, and Valle-Cruz (2022, p.54) social media is now a commonplace and even necessary component of people’s daily life. In this way, social networks have been more important than ever because customer opinions and recommendations—which are typically more believable than company information and advertisements—have a greater impact on prospective customers' purchase intentions and decision. Furthermore, research on consumer behaviour and panic purchases in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that external factors like limited supply and limited availability of products dramatically raise consumers' moods and encourage more impulsive, and purchasing behaviours online and in person. As we can see below, figure 2.1. it represents how much social media can impact consumer behavior habits in the online environment.

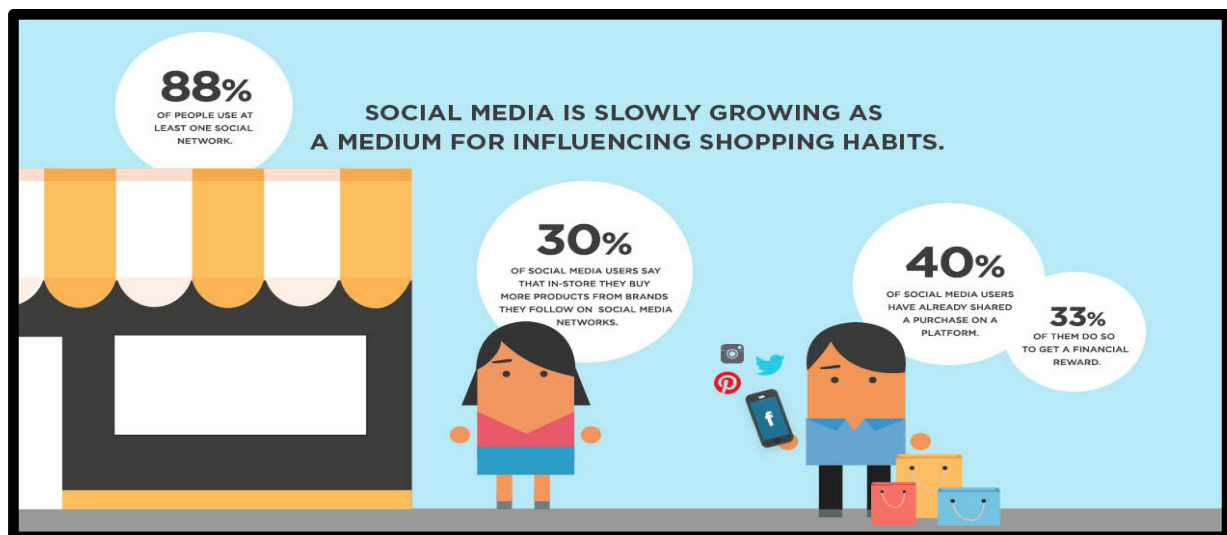


Figure 2.1: Social Media as Medium

(Source : LinkedIn, 2023)

The picture shows how social media is slowly changing the way people shop. A lot of people (88%) use at least one social network. A third would buy something from a business or service

they saw on social media if a friend told them to. People are 40% more likely to believe a product they saw on a site they like, and 30% do this to make money. People have a lot of different ideas about what social media is, which shows how difficult it is as a business tool and a way to talk to people (Tuten, 2023). It works as websites and apps that let people connect and share content online, which makes it easy for people to make and share user-generated content (Evans, Bratton and McKee, 2021). Members of different groups can connect, talk, and have talks on social media sites to share facts, ideas, and experiences without leaving their homes (Wibowo *et al.*, 2020, p.189). But different definitions of customer habits look at other parts of the economy, such as quality and price. Some meanings talk about how it affects society and culture, while others talk about internal things like reasons and views (Dolega, Rowe and Branagan, 2021, p.102501). These various views demonstrate the complexity of social media and consumer habits. They also emphasise how necessary it is to view things from various angles in order to fully comprehend them.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT REACH OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AS ONE OF THE MOST USED STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Influencer marketing is prominent on social media. Popular social media influencers can promote the company's commercial ideas. Celebrities and specialty content makers are respected advisors. Influencer marketing reaches many people in different ways. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok allow influencers to reach worldwide audiences (Haenlein et al. 2020, pp.5-25). This lets marketers reach a wide range of people and niche markets that traditional advertising can't. Impact marketing may also help the organisation connect more honestly. Influencer material seems more genuine than ads, which may be disbelieved. Businesses may improve customer interactions with like-minded CEOs. It can increase corporate loyalty and publicity. Influencer marketing beats attention. Collaboration and influence are involved. Influencers may engage followers with product reviews, sponsored material, and interactive campaigns (Hughes et al. 2019, pp.78-96). Marketing may profit from inclusivity by improving brand recognition and website traffic. Paid posts, product placements, live streaming, and influencer takeovers help brands reach their audiences. In the internet era, influencer marketing is widespread. Companies may deepen consumer relationships on several social media sites.

CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

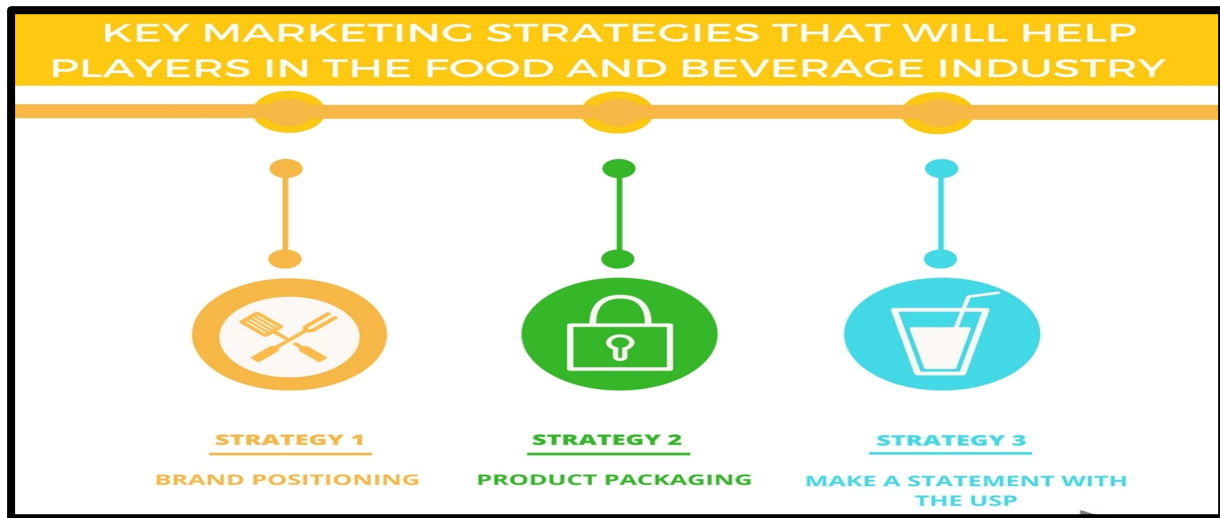


Figure 2.2: Key Social Media Marketing Strategies For Food Industry

(Source: Ki et al. 2020, p.102133)

Food businesses must employ social media marketing to reach clients in the digital age. Influencer marketing is the most effective strategy since it influences what and how people buy. Influencer marketing is collaborating with social media users with many followers and engagements (Ki et al. 2020, p.102133). These influencers are culinary experts or aficionados who create engaging content by demonstrating goods, recipes, and eating experiences in real life. This engages followers in their material. Brands leverage influencers' followers' trust and reputation to persuade consumers to buy. Influencer marketing differs from paid advertisements and brand promoted content on social media.

Influencer marketing is unparalleled in authenticity, reach, and connection. Influential people's advice seems more trustworthy. This mindset makes brand loyalty and purchase more likely. Influencer collaboration helps marketers target specific audiences and have a precise demography, improving marketing effectiveness and ROI (Bakri et al. 2023, pp.37-48).

Influencer marketing dominates food business social media marketing for these reasons: increases brand exposure, consumer engagement, and sales.

Consumer interest is only increasing with the development of new social networking platforms as we can see in the graph below, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and TikTok there

are the most popular social media platforms in the world with millions users. Moreover, users and influencers have a substantial power and can easily promote products, increase visibility, deliver a message, communicate with the audience, etc.

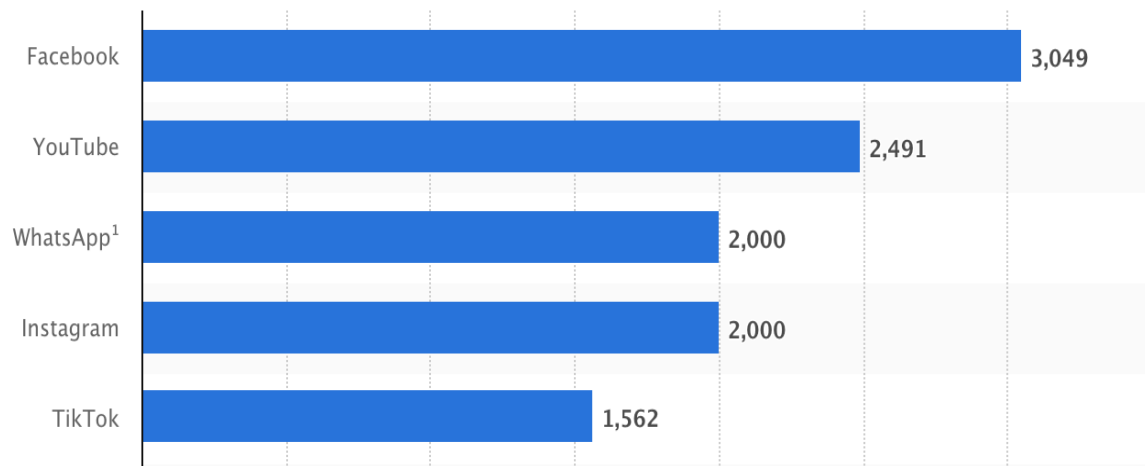


Figure 2.3: Most popular Social Media platforms (in mil.)

(Source: Dixon, 2024)

In the digital era, influencer marketing is a crucial strategy for the food industry to attract customers. Food businesses may provide compelling content on social media that encourages customers to make purchases. Because of their connection, authenticity, and reach, influencers are seen as more reliable, which boosts sales and brand loyalty.

2.4 THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING BRINGS TO THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Social media marketing has given food firms several options. It revolutionised how companies connect with customers and market items. Social media has increased brand visibility and reach. Social media lets food marketers reach a worldwide audience (Samoggia et al. 2019 pp.928-956). These methods can reach varied people from diverse backgrounds regardless of location. Brands may now instantaneously communicate with customers via social media. Customers are encouraged to remark on goods live. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter allow brands to interact with followers, answer enquiries, and resolve issues rapidly

(Wilson et al. 2020). This helps the brand increase consumer loyalty by strengthening relationships. Influencer marketing may help food brands get such possibilities.

Brands may work with powerful culinary influencers to reach more people and engage with specific demographics. Influencers captivate fans with realistic and relevant material. Posts promote brand items and engage viewers. Brands may collaborate with influencers to gain followers' trust and authenticity. This increases brand loyalty and sales. Thus, influencer marketing boosts food company brand exposure, engagement, and sales on social media.

CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ESPECIALLY INFLUENCER MARKETING IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Social media marketing offers advantages, but influencer marketing has problems. These challenges must be addressed for risk-free success. Working with influencers makes honesty and candor challenging. Customers are becoming more suspicious of advertising as influencer marketing expands. Brands must balance influencers' reputation and reach to maintain sponsored content honestly without losing customer trust (Wellman et al. 2020, pp.68-82).

Social media may make bad news due to its speed and reach. A controversial endorsement or product issue may swiftly become a PR disaster that affects the brand's image and consumer confidence. Effective crisis management and communication may reduce such risks and protect the brand. Social media marketing by food businesses may be regulated. Advertising, labelling, and health claim limitations vary per platform. To meet such criteria and limit legal risk, businesses must navigate complicated legal frameworks.

The profitability of influencer marketing is unknown to many food businesses. Campaign success depends on engagement, reach, and follower growth, yet influencer marketing is hard to correlate to sales and money (Pankka et al. 2019). To succeed in social media and influencer marketing, food firms must stress authenticity, transparency, legal compliance, and crisis management. Companies may address these issues to enhance social media marketing while limiting its dangers and drawbacks.

2.5 ANALYSING BOTH THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES, ESPECIALLY INFLUENCER MARKETING CREATE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Social media marketing, especially influencer marketing, affects behaviour. This effect can benefit or harm people. Due to social media's importance in influencing customer purchasing behaviour, the use of social media platforms for communication and product promotion or distribution has grown significantly in recent years. Consumers are less likely to use traditional channels as a result of the rise of mobile-friendly online media channels. Moreover, consumers are more likely to turn to social media platforms when they are looking for brand information (Hanaysha, 2022). In addition, interacting with customers virtually, company can collaborate with social media influencers, that have already influence and trust to the target audience, also may influence consumers buying decisions by building brand trust. When actual celebrities advocate items or talk about favourable experiences with them, people are persuaded (Moraes et al. 2019, pp.1159-1192). This boosts brand perception and encourages product purchases. Influencers offer important information and product recommendations to help consumers make wise choices. Influencer marketing promotes brand-customer engagement.

This lets customers provide the brand feedback. Influencers humanise businesses and generate relatable content to engage with their audience. Brand loyalty and support might increase. These are positive impacts, but they may also be destructive.

Customers are growing less likely to trust promotional endorsements as influencer marketing grows. Influencers' efforts may suffer. Also, too many sponsored posts on social media might make individuals bored of adverts and ignore or mute them. Influencer marketing may also promote unrealistic beauty standards or harmful behaviours, notably in the food business (De Regt et al. 2020, pp.168-179). Brands that use influencers to promote fashionable diets or unrealistic body ideals might impair people's health. Influencer marketing may promote trust, connection, and brand loyalty or reduce health and raise scepticism, ad fatigue, and disbelief in exaggerated advertising. Most significantly, the company must strike a balance between being true, honest, and doing the right thing while limiting risks to maximise influencer marketing and in this case they will attract more consumers and affects their purchase decisions in a positive way for everyone.

2.9 LITERATURE GAP

There is lots of research that has already been done on the advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing strategies in social media marketing of the food industry. However when it comes to the long term benefits and durability of influencer partnerships there are big gaps in literature. A lot of research has been done on short term metrics like engagement rates and brand visibility (Hughes *et al.* 2019, pp.78-96). However, not much research has been done on how collaborating with influencers affect customer behaviour, brand reputation and purchase decisions (Bu *et al.* 2022, p.102904.). It is required to do research on how well influencer marketing works for different types of food products and different types of people. Filling in these literature gaps will only help people to understand how influence marketing is changing the way people buy things and the way the food industry is marketing their products. This would help brands to make better decisions and do social media marketing more effectively.

2.6 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING: THE HONEYCOMB MODEL

Kaplan and Haenlein devised the Honeycomb Model in 2010 (Pietikäinen et al. 2020). This model includes seven key elements to understand social media behaviour. These elements highlight how individuals interact and act online, offering marketers a full foundation to create effective tactics.

Some features of the honeycomb model apply to food firms' influencer marketing on social media. Seven elements are discussed in the model and are presented below.

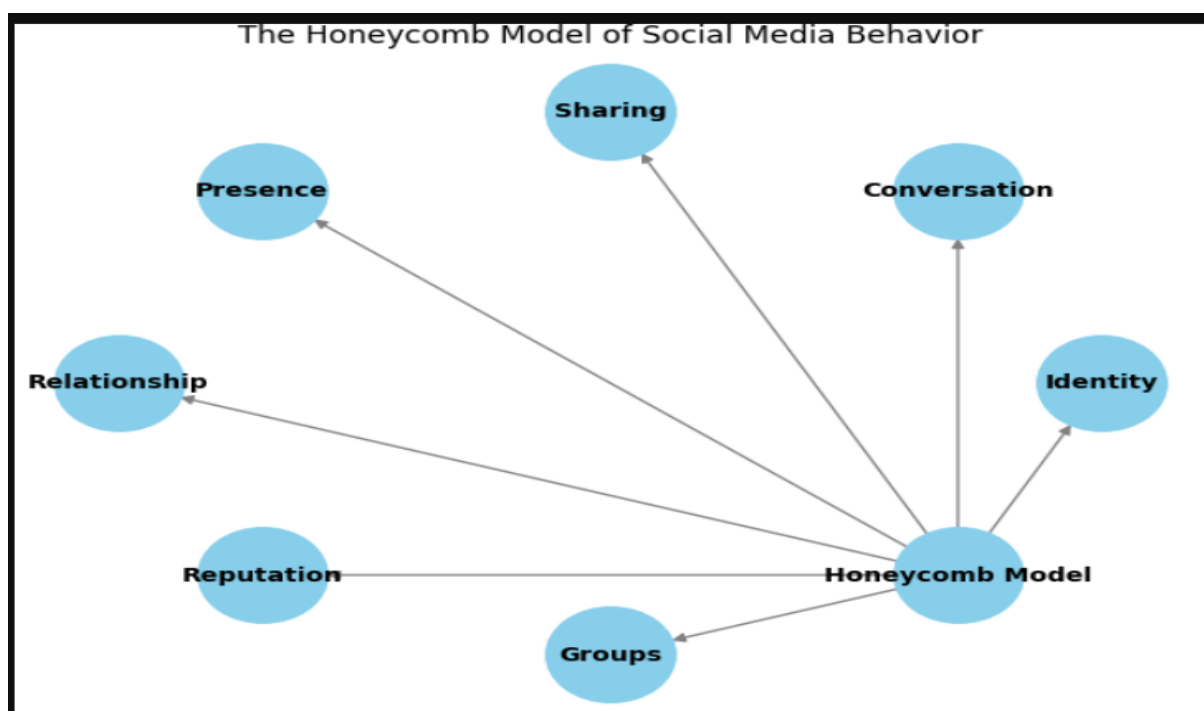


Figure 2.4: Honeycomb Model

(Source: Pietikäinen et al. 2020)

Identity: How people present themselves on social media, including their personal interests, lifestyle, and online reputation, notably in the food industry (Qutteina et al. 2019, p.2637). Influencers must present audience-relevant personalities. Their genuineness, relevance, and connection establish trust and reputation.

Conversation: Social media interaction. Influencers post material, reply to comments, and connect with followers. Influencers recommend items, provide recipes, and talk about their experiences to boost brand awareness. Influencers encourage participation and brand virality.

Sharing: Influencers share sponsored material, views, and experiences. Their endorsement functions as social proof and impacts followers' purchase decisions, sometimes helping them make the appropriate choice (Sanak-Kosmowska et al. 2021).

Presence: Social media activity and exposure determine an influencer's digital network impact. Influencers' visible and active presence fosters follower connections, engagement, and brand loyalty.

Relationship: This element shows users' relationships, from casual acquaintances to serious friendships or professional networks. Influencers must create and sustain relationships with followers to engage, trust, and support.

Reputation: Credibility, authenticity, and authority in online communities are established by influencers' reputations (Singh et al. 2020, pp.464-480). An important user with a good reputation can boost brand loyalty and support. The brand may market their goods using their reputation.

Groups: More like communities or interest groups on social media. Influencers join or form food communities, allowing advertisers to offer personalised messaging to specific groups.

Honeycomb model provides a holistic perspective of social media interactions, notably in food influencer marketing.

According to Khatoon (2023), the Honeycomb model is a model whose components can provide a deep analysis and evaluation of particular social media users' experience and behavior. Due to increasing number of consumers on social media, users can easily access the internet and have high expectations from the companies presented in the network. So, to increase and maintain the target audience, companies should take into consideration the Honeycomb model, which is a helpful instrument that can create a successful strategy based on seven elements.

Authors Talwar et al. (2020), in contrast with this vision, the Honeycomb model is the perfect framework and provides a sensible foundation for evaluating the different roles that social media play. As an example, brands can benefit from the Honeycomb model for instance by using their influencer marketing strategies.

2.7 COMPARING THE HONEYCOMB MODEL APPROACH WITH RACE MODEL

According to Chaffey (2023), the RACE model was designed to give businesses an easy to use framework for creating an integrated digital marketing strategy that in the future tackles the difficulties of connecting with online or offline target audiences.

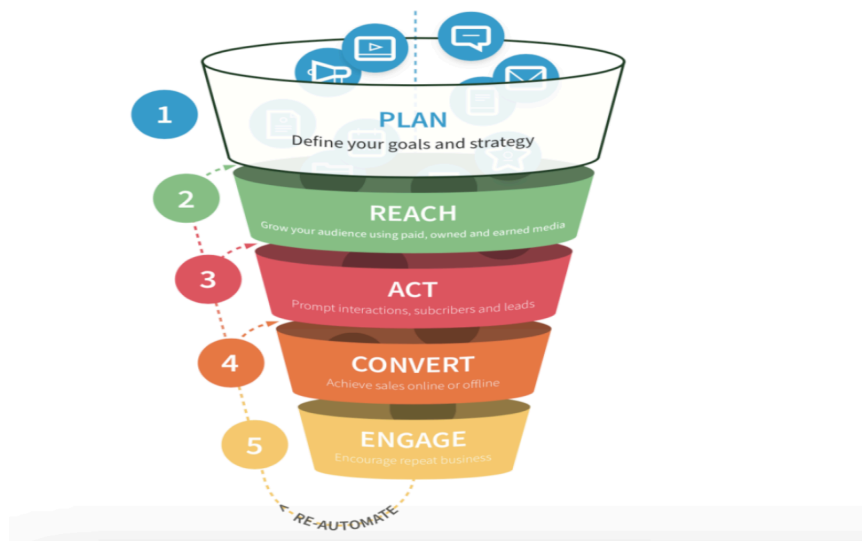


Figure 2.5 RACE model

(Source: Chaffey, 2023)

In this figure, the researcher showed all stages which were designed to help to understand both online and offline marketing communication and consumer behavior.

Reach – is designed to build brand visibility on other platforms in order to increase interactions with consumers. As a example is multiple interactions on social media platforms, email or websites (Chaffey, 2023).

Act - is about engaging the target audience to search more about the brand, products, register as a member and stay connected.

Convert – this stage is about sales, where consumers step by step reach the stage and decide to buy the product.

Engage – at this stage company will try to build and maintain consumers relationship and loyalty, through emails, and ads on social media platforms in order to repeat purchases (Chaffey and Patron, 2012).

RACE framework advantages:

- Useful model creation to understand contemporary consumers and the marketplace.
- Practical oriented on the Internet.
- Performance improvement is the basis of the RACE model.

RACE disadvantages:

- Inflexible structure: the model structure might not be able to accommodate variations in consumer behaviour.
- Ignoring modern marketing strategies: framework might be missing out on other vital aspects of marketing, such as storytelling or community development.
- Measurement of effectiveness might be challenged for multichannel companies (Sestino, et al. 2023).

Honeycomb model advantages:

- Better understanding of the consumer behavior on social media platforms.
- Increasing relationship with consumers.
- Create competitive advantages for companies (Silva et al., 2020).

Honeycomb model disadvantages:

- Guidance is limited in terms of implementation.
- Differences between cultures and regions: companies should take into consideration consumer behavior and their preferences that may vary between cultures.
- The model is complex because contains seven dimensions and might be hard to follow all of them (Jugal et al., 2023).

The similarity is that both the Honeycomb Model and the RACE Model explain social media behaviour in the digital marketing area, but in different ways and with distinct purposes.

As a difference, the RACE model contains four stages such as reach, act, convert and engage but the Honeycomb Model examines identification, presence, discourse, sharing, groups, and presence to build a complete picture of online communication (Koay et al., 2020. Pp.53-72).

The RACE Model organises social media marketing project planning and tracking. However, the Honeycomb Model examines human behaviour more closely. Thus, each model has pros and cons. RACE has more rules than Honeycomb.

2.8 DISCUSSING THE POTENTIAL STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE EFFECTIVE FOR MITIGATING THE ISSUES

The brand can deal with social media marketing problems especially influencer marketing in the food industry by prioritising on being real and honest in partnerships with influencers (Wellman *et al.* 2020, pp.68-82). Brands should make sure that sponsored materials are real and stay true to their values in order to keep people's trust. The brand needs to be proactive about crisis management and communicate clearly in order to deal with bad press and criticism rapidly. The brand can also reduce the legal risks and protect a brand's reputation by maintaining ethical standards and obeying the regulations (Mahmood *et al.* 2020, p.1847979020927547). Brands can also make changes to their strategies and get better results by analysing and checking their campaign performance data regularly. This can make their social media marketing more effective and help to have a bigger impact.

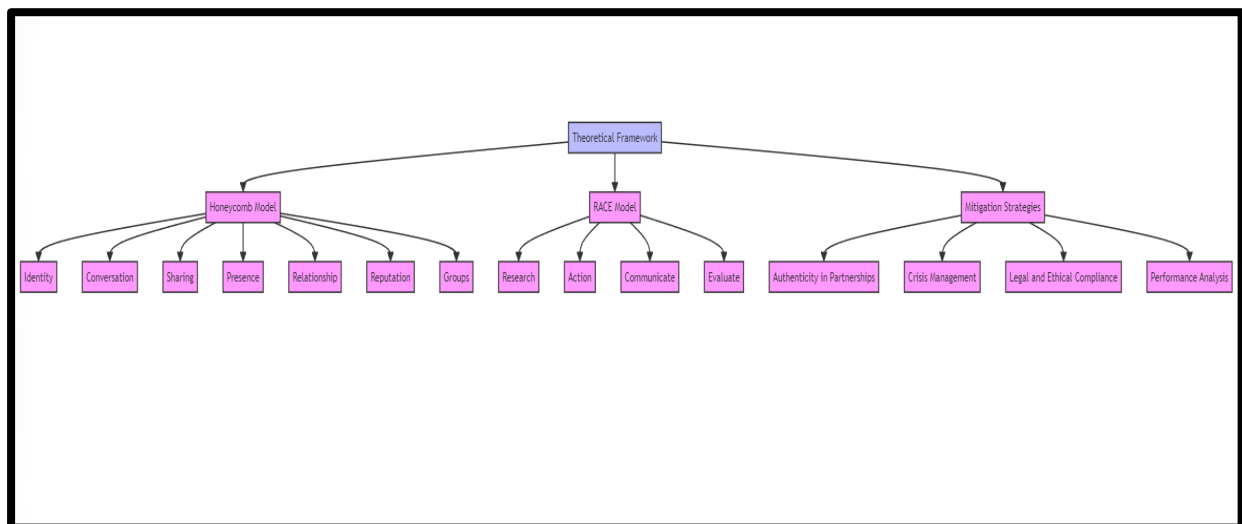


Figure 2.6: Theoretical Framework
(Source: Self-created)

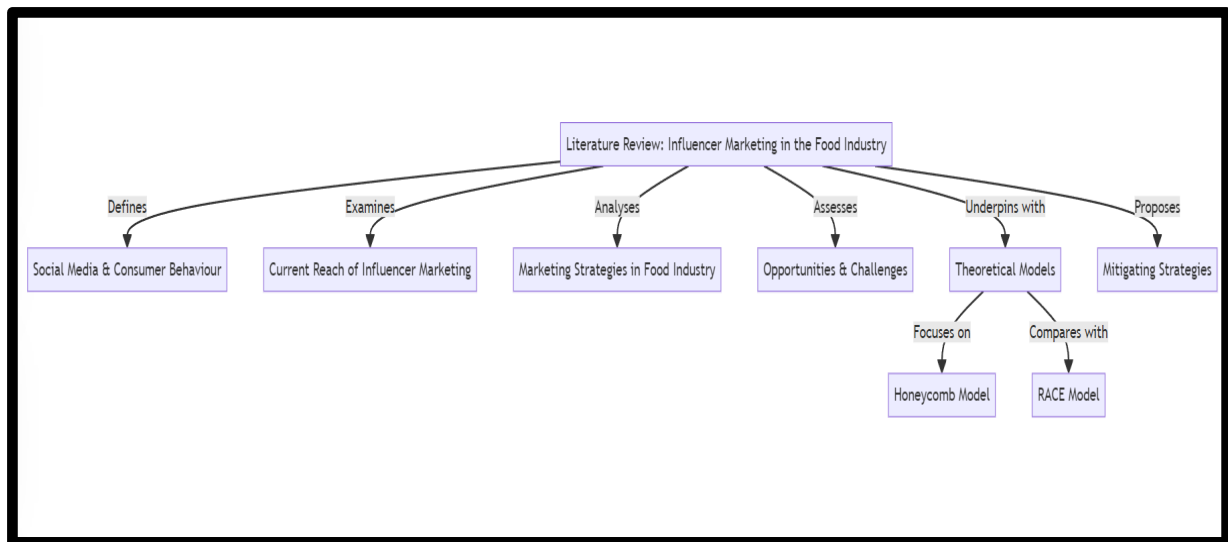


Figure 2.7: Conceptual Framework

(Source: Self-created)

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section explains methodological, paradigmatic, and psychological ways to look into social media influencer marketing. Further, the chapter is about the sampling methods, the steps used to collect and analyse data, the study methods, and the ethical issues that guided the research.

The entire chapter pays attention to a thorough examination of the research techniques that can be found in the full research. Additionally, methods and tools for data analysis will further be discussed, considering all the ethical concerns. Apart from that, this chapter will point out the type of investigation's advantages and disadvantages, time horizon and the study's sampling had been determined.

Clear methods are provided in the research methodology to identify, collect, quantify, and evaluate relevant data (Collins, 2014). The theoretical approach of the "research methodology" stage is one of the steps in a research onion framework that has been explained below.

3.2 RESEARCH ONION

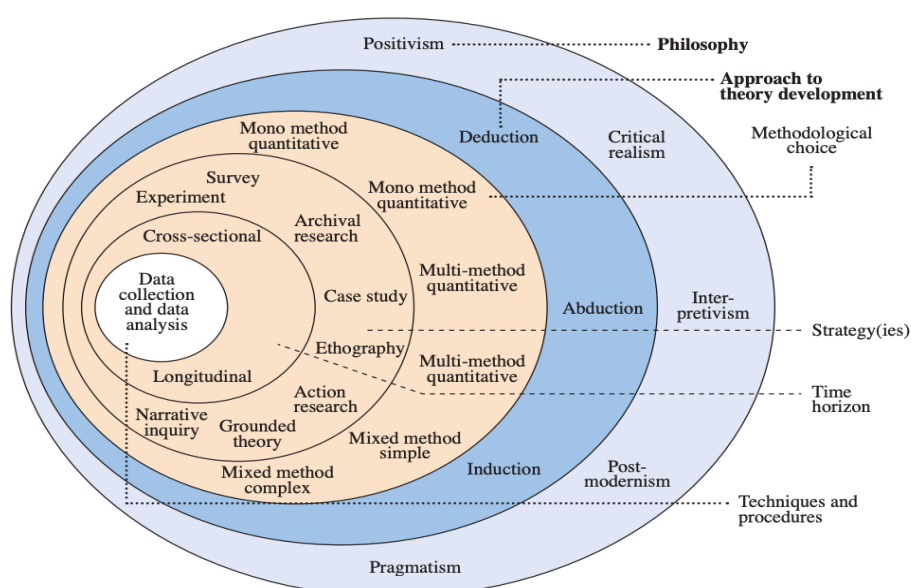


Figure 3.1 Research Onion

(Source: Saunders, Thornhill, & Lewis, 2019, p.130)

The **research onion framework** presented in Figure 3.1 represents a structured design of five layers and the core “data collection and data analysis” that is the last step in conducting research.

In this chapter researcher will analyse all layers such as philosophy, approach to theory development, methodological choice, strategy, etc. in order to get to the core of the research onion which is data collection and analysis (mardiana, 2020, p.2).

3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION OF THE RESEARCH

Positivism is the research theory that this study used. Positivism says that there is a need to look at real-life social events to make broad statements that sound like rules. It tries to answer the questions that were asked at the start by understanding them Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis 2019, p.130-144). The goal is to give a full and fair picture of the social media influencer marketing trend by using facts that can be checked, steps that can be seen, and data that can't be changed (Muhaise et al., 2020). The study is positive because it looks at events that can be seen and measured and tries to find information that can be used in many situations (Saunders, Thornhill, & Lewis, 2019, p.144). Social media influencer marketing is an area that works with numbers and results that can be seen, so hope is a good word for the study. An objective method is used in the study to make sure that the results are correct, dependable, and able to be replayed. It now helps to know more about the complicated parts of social media marketing plans.

3.4 POSITION OF RESEARCH APPROACH

The study uses facts and ideas that are already known to come up with theories, which are then put to the analysis by seeing them in real life. The **deductive approach** has been employed for the effective analysis of this research data.

The point of the study was to find out how well star marketing works on social media, and this fits with that. For example, the Honeycomb model lets the researcher look at certain ideas and study models in a planned way.

This way, they can gather information and come to results that look like rules. According to Melnikovas, (2018, p.33), this method makes it easier to use statistical tools in survey research. This makes it easier to guess what the results will be and come up with good scientific findings.

3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A **survey method** is used as part of the study design to get organized and full data.

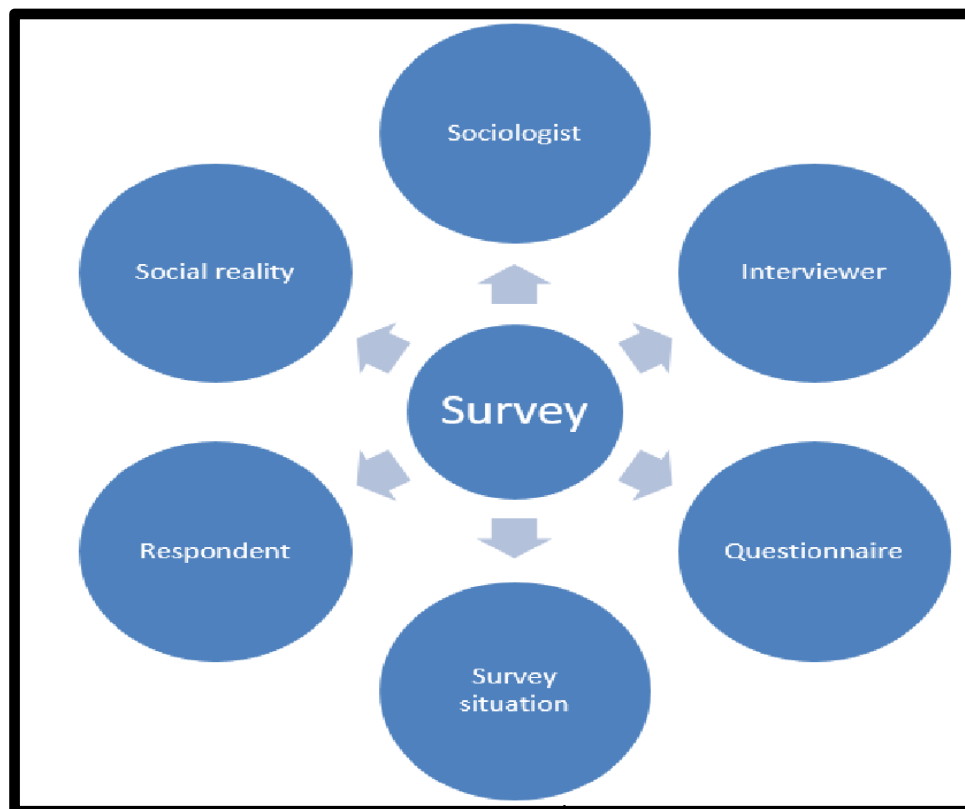


Figure 3.2 Survey Method
(Source: Melnikovas, 2018, p.33)

Researchers can get a lot of different answers this way when they look into social media influencer marketing in the food business. Survey research is a way to get hard numbers about a lot of things that have to do with how people act and how well influencer marketing works for the study (Rezigalla, 2020).

It is important to think about problems like responder bias and mistakes in the poll design to make sure that the results are correct.

Advantages of the survey:

- Might be conducted online and obtain data from different countries.
- Cost effectiveness in comparison to other methods.

Disadvantages of the survey:

- Answers that might lack credibility.
- Superficial depth. Surveys frequently yield less data than other qualitative techniques, such as interviews (Braun et al., 2020).

3.6 TYPE OF INVESTIGATION

Primary Research is first – time research or in other words is a method that enables the analysis of data from the initial source of information. In addition, primary research is frequently used in qualitative methodological choice, especially this method collects data through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires (George, 2023).

Advantages of primary research:

- Provides original and new data adjusted to research objectives.
- Provides possibilities for direct communication with the participants.
- Makes it easier to gather qualitative data, enabling comprehensive knowledge and details (Mazhar et al., 2021).

Disadvantages of primary research:

- Time – consuming, especially to find participants.
- The study's sample often produces results that cannot be generalized.
- Excessive/limited amount of data (O’gorman and MacIntosh, 2015).

Secondary Research refers to research data that has been obtained from another source by a third party and may be used for purposes other than primary research. Moreover, secondary research can be conducted by using books, articles, information collected from government, newspapers, and other sources (Pederson et al., 2020).

Apart from that, this research will be conducted by both types of investigations.

Advantages of secondary research:

- Gives a variety of information and resources access such as academic journals, books.
- High level of credibility, relevant literature, provided information already includes publisher's name and date of publishing.
- Enables historical research over the years due to data maintenance (Cowhitt, Butler and Wilson, 2019).

Disadvantages of secondary research:

- Time – consuming, because contains a large volume of information that requires careful evaluation.
- Is not unique, since data is accessible for all, many researchers can use them.
- Constrained perspective, secondary research might not address every aspect of the subject which may lead to misleading (Dina Diatta and Berchtold, 2022).

3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

The **descriptive research method** is used in this study to look closely at, record, and rate the parts of social media influencer marketing tactics that change how people buy food. People can get a fuller idea of something they are studying by studying it in more depth, which helps them understand it better. In this study, it was used to find patterns, trends, and links. This helps with making long-term choices and gives politicians and people who work in the field knowledge (Huntington-Klein, 2021).

3.8 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

There is a mix of primary and secondary research in this study to make sure the qualitative data is right and to look at the primary data from online surveys. The study wants to find out as much as it can about social media influencer marketing tactics and how well they work by using both **quantitative and qualitative methods**.

This choice of mixed method makes sure that the data comes from three different sources and takes into account how hard the research questions are. It improves the authenticity of the study results (Kwadwo and Hamza, 2015).

Advantages of mixed methods:

- Comprehensive understanding. Provides more contributions to a topic when quantitative (exploring through numbers) and qualitative (exploring through words) methodologies are combined.
- Enhanced credibility. In order to maximise the ability of review findings by eliminating the constraints of a single method.
- Integrity in analysis. This method provide reasonable interpretations based on resaerch questions and is supported by the data (Stern et al., 2021).

Disadvantages of mixed methods:

- Complexity. It can be challenging because mixed method is complex in data collection and validation.
- Time – consuming. It requires time to accumulate and interpret findings.
- Integrating the outcomes can provide difficulties because the quantitative and qualitative methods are different and results can be contradictory (Harrison, Reilly, and Creswell, 2020).

3.9 TIME HORIZON

This study goes on for ten weeks and looks at two different time periods. This option works with the study's short time window for scientific research. As the study period comes to an end, there is a need to make sure that the research goals are met. Within the time limit, a **cross-sectional** time range helps to gather and examine data successfully.

This makes it easier to finish on time and makes sure that the study is complete and makes sense (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p.212)

3.10 RESEARCH SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND POPULATION

To pick people for the study from a variety of social media sites and ideas, a non-probability choosing method known as "random sampling" is used. The majority of the sample consisted of my colleagues and friends, however, I was acquainted with a few of the key study participants from my academic coursework and some of whom I had informal contact with.

The sample size of 50 people was picked by taking into account how realistic it was and how few resources were available.

A group of people over 18 in London from different social classes, genders, and places was chosen as a **sample type**, so that the study could get a picture of the whole community.

However, convenience picking can lead to bias, which makes it harder to use the results in other scenarios.

In light of this, the **sampling method** is non – probability, convenience sampling method based on respondents' availability and who might be able to respond. Apart from that the results need to be carefully analysed, and any flaws should be carefully thought through. This sampling method's cost – effectiveness and focus on specific research objectives are its greatest **advantages**. As **disadvantage** of non – probability sampling methods is that it occurs without the knowledge that the individuals selected in the sample are representative of the total population (Mweshi and Sakyi, 2020).

3.11 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS/TECHNIQUES

It is mostly an online survey made with **Microsoft Forms** that is used to gather information for the study. With these surveys, you can get complete and useful information. It is important to get all the information you need by using both closed and open-ended questions, such as multiple-choice and Likert scale. The survey will contain seven **closed-ended** questions and four **open-ended** questions. Along with main data, secondary sources like books and journals, articles are also used.

Microsoft Word will be used to make sure that themes and patterns are looked at in depth and understood for the Thematic Analysis of this type of data. **Excel** will be used to make

graphs and learn statistics for quantitative data analysis. People from some groups might not be able to fill out online surveys while using them too often, though. This could change how representative the data is.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE RESEARCH

Ethics is the study of human behaviour as it relates to social research. Moreover, it is the moral code of consideration, decision-making, and responsibility of researchers during the process of their research (Mauthner, 2002, p.14). In other words ethics involves informed consent, data confidentiality, and privacy. Ethics guidelines from institutional review boards should guide the study. Study participants' rights must always be protected. There must be an upfront approach about the merits and downsides of participating. There is a need to disclose and manage conflicts of interest.

The researcher will safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of any primary data obtained, and not provide any information to outside parties.

3.13 SUMMARY

The section talks about the whole plan that the researcher used to look into social media influencer marketing in the part called "Analysis." In addition, the research onion framework helps in creating systemic and comprehensive academic research. Positivism, a detailed research method, and a rational method are all used in the study which ensures the preservation of the entire research's authenticity. It also goes over how to get both primary and secondary data with advantages and disadvantages of both. The researcher discussed sampling in this chapter, along with the methods that were used to provide thorough study.

Apart from that, ethics concerns make sure that people give their permission after being told about the risks and that their data is kept secret. This makes it more likely that the study results are correct.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, this section talks about the social media marketing techniques being used in the food business right now, with a focus on influencer marketing. In order to determine the successful results of the research, this chapter also includes survey questions with responses obtained straight from online survey participants.

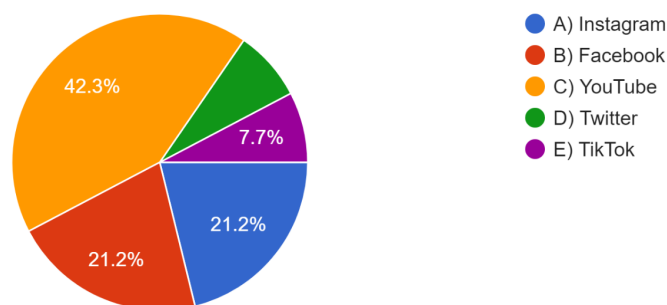
This part talks about the analysis of the data that was done using the research objectives and different parts of digital food marketing. It talks about things like platform choices, customer habits on social media.

In this analysis, 52 responses were obtained from the participants. Furthermore, the respondents' statistical analysis shows that every one of the participants accesses social media and has at least one personal account on the social media platforms presented in this chapter.

4.2 DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Which social media platform do you think is most effectively used by the food industry for marketing?

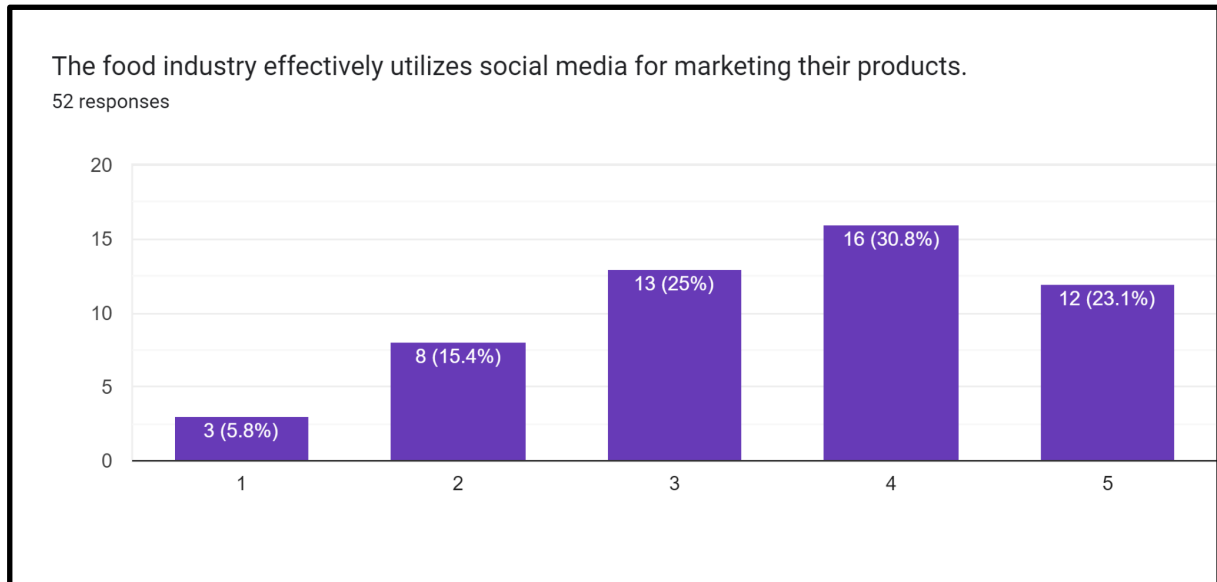
52 responses



As part of the data collection, primary research was used by creating an online survey.

As 50 and more population were targeted and it was possible to collect responses from 52 people, the data will be analysed based on the opinions recorded. In order to understand the views of people it was asked which social media platform they think is most effectively used

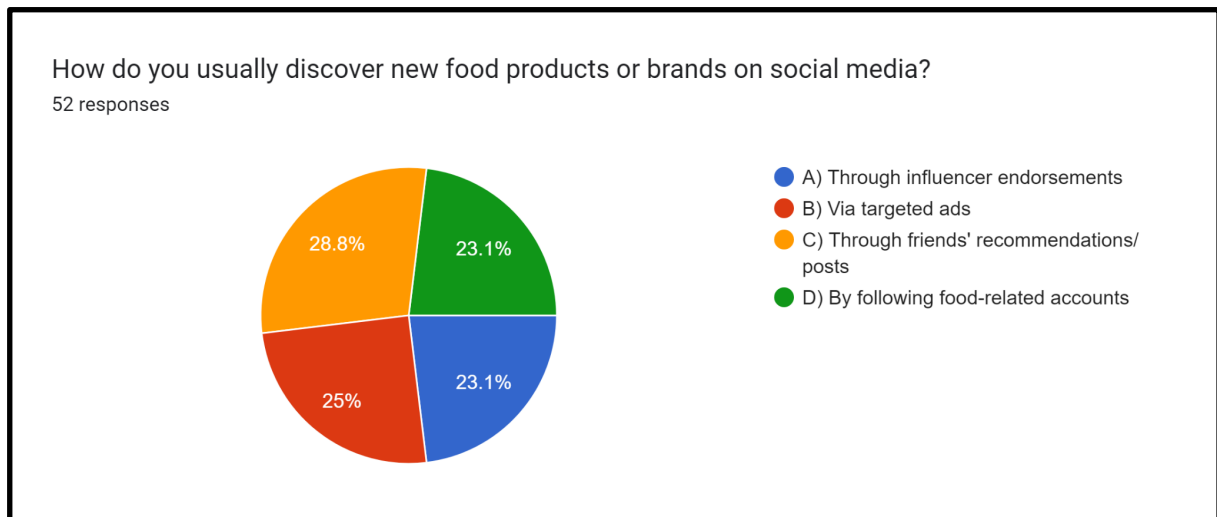
by the food industry for marketing, and as a response 21.2% think it is Instagram, while 21.2% think it is Facebook. A large percentage of participants 42.3 think it is YouTube, 7.7% think it is TikTok and the rest think it is Twitter. Apart from that, all of these platforms have a highly level of popularity with millions of users.



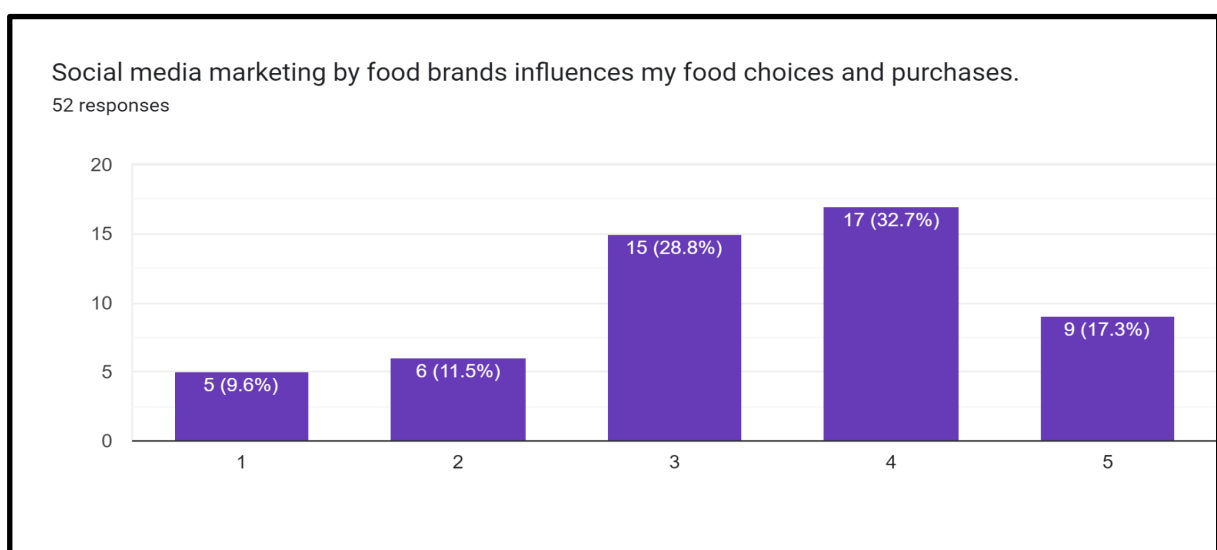
The population were also asked for their opinion about the effective usage of social media marketing for the promotions of the products by the food industry. The respondents were asked to mark on a scale of 1-5. So, 5.8% think it deserves a 1 rating, while 15.4% opted for 2 ratings. On the contrary atleast 25% think it is quite moderate in a level as they rated 30.8 % respondents have rated the marketing efforts 4 and 23.1% has given it 5.



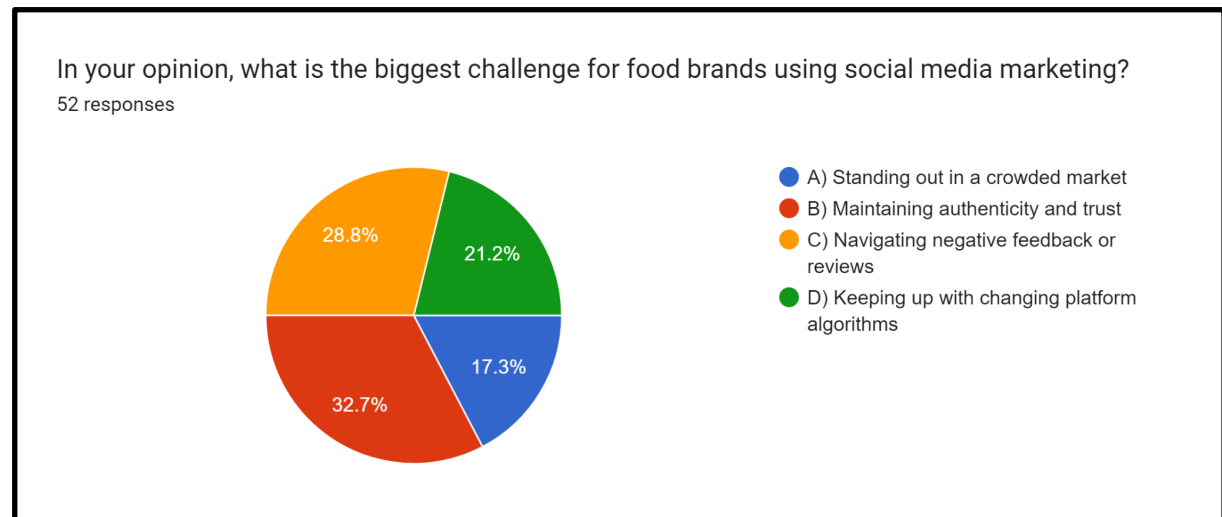
As part of the survey the respondents have also been asked what kind of social media marketing strategy of the food products attracts them the most on platforms. From the above graph it can be seen that 26.9% of respondents think is influencer collaborations, 25% think it is user-generated content campaigns. On the contrary 25% think it is giveaways and contests that attracts them while the rest 23.1% finds informative content such as recipes and facts interesting.



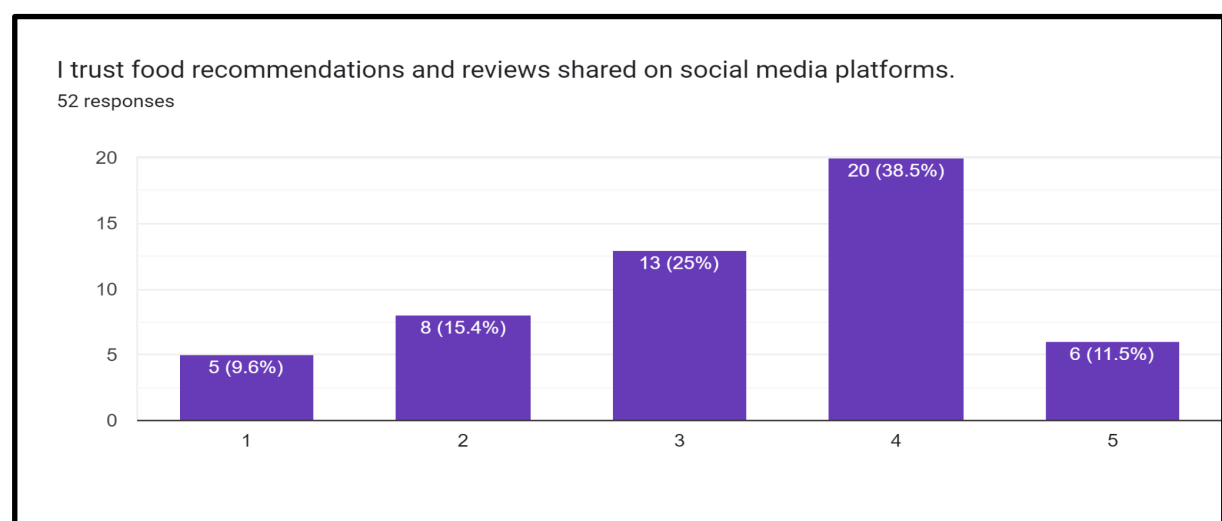
The population was asked how they discover new food products or brands on social media, to which opinions are divided into 23.1% thinks it is through influencer endorsements. Moreover, 25% think they get lured by targeted ads, while for 28.8% the driving factor is through friends' recommendations and posts. The rest 23.1% say they get such contents by following food related accounts.



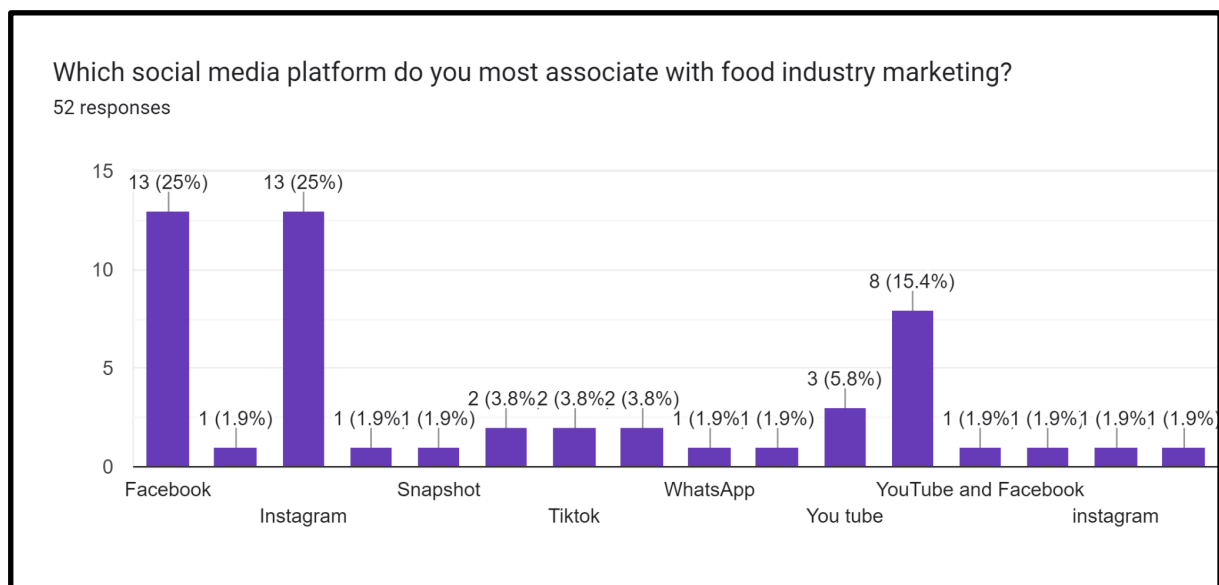
The survey asked the participants to rate to what extent social media marketing by food brands influences their food choices and purchases on a scale of 1-5. To answer it, 9.6% have opted for the rating 1. Also 11.5% respondents are influenced by social media when it comes to food purchases while 28.8%, 32.7% and 17.3% of the respondents have consecutively rated it 3, 4 and 5. Which means with the development of social networks, consumers might be affected by it and their purchase decision.



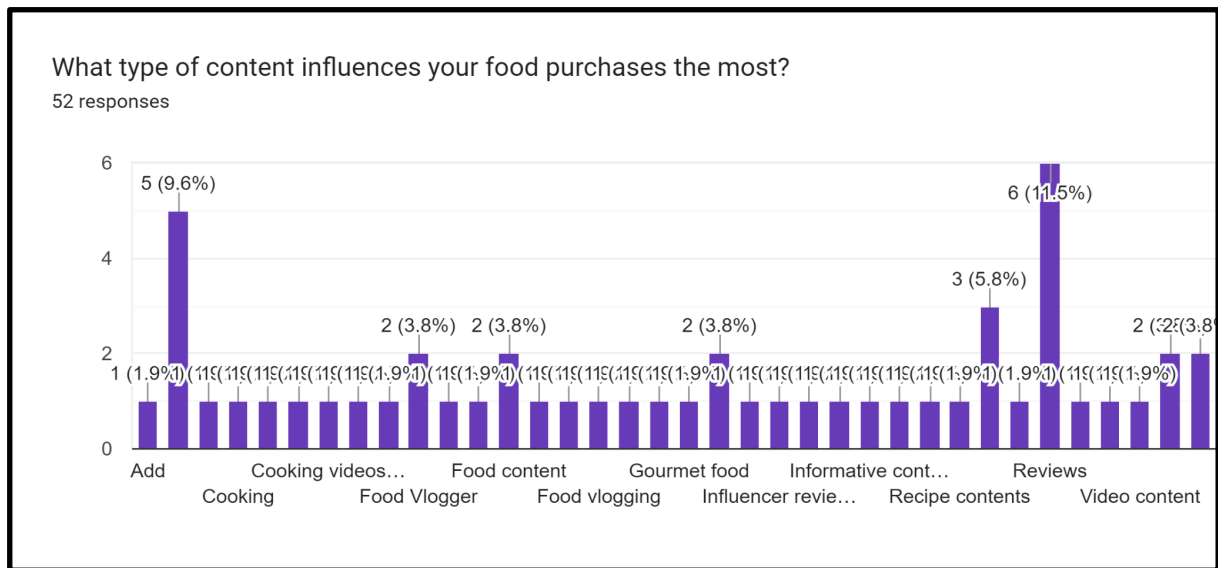
The respondents were asked to share their opinion regarding what they think the biggest challenge is for the food brands using social media marketing. 17.3% think it is for standing out in a crowded market. On the other hand 32.7% think it is to maintain authenticity and trust. 28.8% thinks its is for navigating negative feedback or reviews while 21.2% think it is to keeping up with changing platform algorithms.



The respondents were asked to mark on a scale of 1-5 about how much they trust food recommendations and reviews shared on social media platforms. 9.6% have opted for 1 while 15.4% have rated it 2. 25% of people have rated it 3. 38.5% have rated it 4 and 11.5% have opted for 5. Further, social media platforms has become a influencer when it comes to consumers decision but not all respondents trust these recommendations. In addition, consumers can trust more those recommendations that comes from influencers or real users who can share their views and opinions regarding products without any preconceived idea.

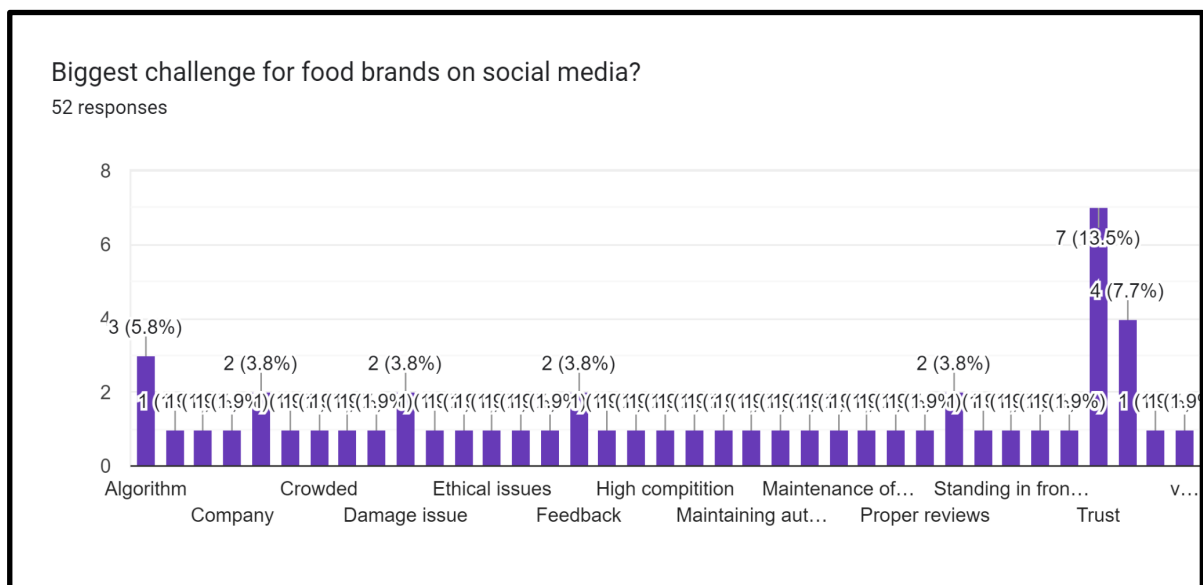


The survey also asked some open-ended questions to the participants to collect their valuable views for creating an effective understanding of the topic. They were asked which social media platform they most associate with food industry marketing. The Data was obtained as 25% have opted for Facebook, where people post their recipes 25% have opted for Instagram, 15.4% have opted for YouTube and Facebook and 5.8% have expressed that it is only YouTube. Other responses include other platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. In addition, respondents opted for 25% of Facebook and Instagram because these platforms often are associated with the food industry. Brands including restaurants, shops, influencers, and users share food content on those platforms.



The respondents were asked what type of content influences their food purchase the most on social media platforms. The most received answers are Advertisements 9.6% and Reviews 11.5%. Other responses are influenced by other sources such as cooking videos 3.8%, food vloggers 3.8%, and food content 3.8%.

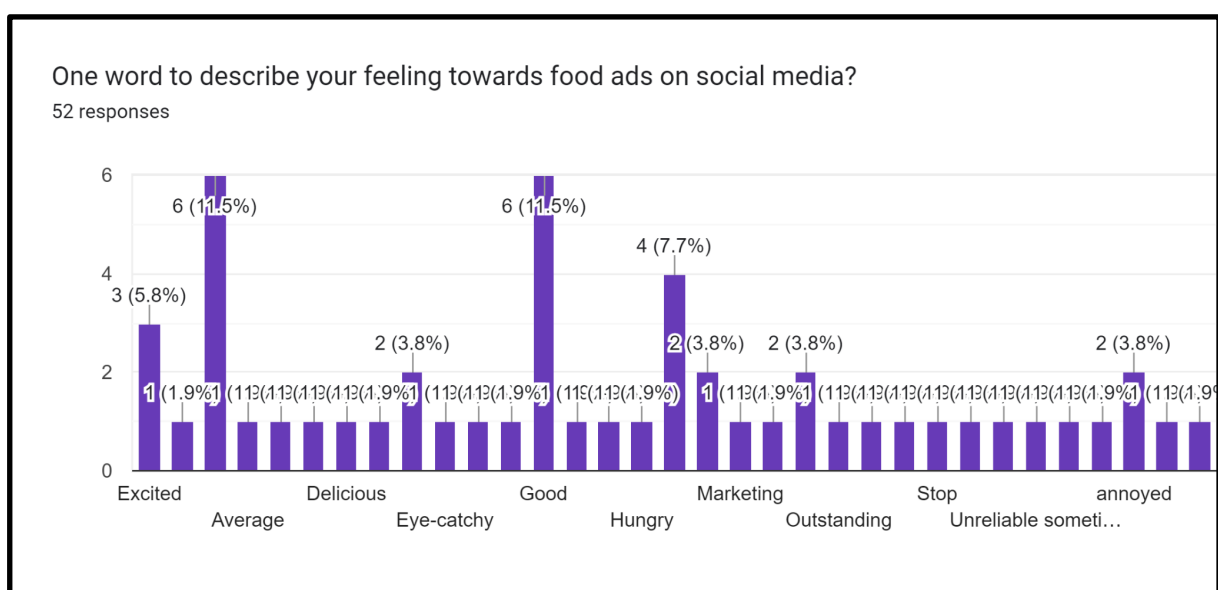
The other respondents and their food purchase decisions are influenced via recipe content 5.8%, gourmet food 3.8%, and video content 3.8% on social media platforms.



The population was asked what they think nowadays is the biggest challenge for food brands on social media. Due to a saturated market, businesses find it extremely challenging to produce original, captivating content that appeals to their target audience. Data was collected from 52 respondents with different points of view. Some think the problem is in an algorithm of 5.8%

that generates useless content for consumers. Some think it is crowded with too much brand content and damage issue 3.8%. On the other hand ethical issues, feedback 3.8% of respondents assume that consumers might have a negative experience and therefore create a negative brand reputation on social media.

The result of this survey has demonstrated the idea that 13.5% of respondents think that brand trust might be a challenge for food industry on social media because consumers do not trust companies advertising on social media.



The survey asked the participants to describe their feelings towards food ads on social media using one word. Respondents' opinions have been divided into 5.8% respondents think that one of the word in food advertising on social media is excited especially when the ad is viral and creative. Further, 11.5% of the respondents think it is average, 11.5% think it is good, and 7.7% think is hungry.

The survey question also shows that 3.8% of respondents feel annoyed especially if it disturbs or regularly shows the same thing in their feeds. On the other hand, 3.8% of respondents assume that it attracted attention "eye-catchy". Mixed reactions include delicious, excited, hungry, outstanding, stop, unreliable sometimes.

4.3 DISCUSSIONS

4.3.1 CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY AND THE DOMINANCE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

The survey result says that food businesses are using influencer marketing more and more as a way to sell themselves on social media. A lot of people who answered said they liked working with celebrities. This shows that using social media stars to sell food is a good idea. This choice was made because influencers' material is honest and easy to get in touch with for people who want real help (Hughes et al. 2019, pp.78).

The survey results also show how hard it is for food companies to be themselves in a market that is full of other companies. This need is met by influencer marketing, which lets companies talk to customers directly through reliable people. This makes the brand more well-known and makes contact easier. For now, the fact that influencer marketing is so common shows how well it works to solve the issues that come up with food marketing on social media these days (Ki et al. 2020, p.102133).

4.3.2 ETHICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ESPECIALLY INFLUENCERS IN THE INDUSTRY

When marketing on social media, especially for food businesses, consider ethics. Many books examine how to be honest about sponsored material and how firms and celebrities may have conflicting interests. Online research concurs. The study's participants distrust celebrities and sponsored material. Negative ratings and legal difficulties plague influencer marketing organisations. Being honest and gaining clients' trust is difficult when sponsored advertisements and true ideas blend. Social media marketing must stress openness, transparency, and customer safety to be ethical (Samoggia et al. 2019 pp.928-956).



This is important when selecting food business leaders. Food firms face moral difficulties with social media marketing. Literature may demonstrate what it means to be loyal to oneself and how celebrities and businesses may have competing financial goals. Surveys support these issues. Many survey respondents distrust influencers and sponsored material.

Management of legal concerns and negative evaluations is complicated (Wellman *et al.* 2020, pp.68-82). People can't tell ads from ideas. This promotes trust and honesty. Social media marketing with food industry leaders needs honesty, transparency, and customer protection.

4.3.3 IMPACT OF THESE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Influencer-driven social media marketing affects behaviour. Influential people's remarks affect clients' attitudes and purchases, studies show. Survey results agree. They show that user marketing and influencers impact purchases. Social media introduces new food brands. Trusted sources' targeted advertising can help clients. Some customers distrust paid content's authenticity. Influencer marketing builds consumer relationships, making them more likely to buy. Since social media marketing may influence behaviour, companies must be honest and moral (Wilson *et al.* 2020).

Social media marketing, especially by celebrities, changes behaviour. Researchers argue celebrities' advice affects thoughts and purchases. User-generated content marketing and influencer connections affect client purchases, according to surveys. Following celebrities and watching food ads is the best way to find new food companies and products. People may be less tolerant of paid content owing to authenticity concerns (Haenlein et al. 2020, pp.5-25).

However, influencer marketing engages customers and promotes brand loyalty. Finally, social media marketing affects customers. This highlights the necessity for ethical companies in this area.

4.3.4 BUILDING STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THE ISSUES WITH EFFECTIVENESS AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Some people are worried about how successful and moral social media marketing really is. Companies should make it a priority to be honest and open with leaders when they are building relationships with them. Customers might trust brands more if they have clear rules about openness, like marking paid content as such. Moreover, brands should make sure that fans follow strict rules to make sure that only moral content is made (Moraes *et al.* 2019, pp.1192).

Regularly keeping track of and judging the work of influencers makes it easy to find and fix any ethical issues that come up. Besides, marketing methods besides suggestions from influencers, such as user-generated content and personalised ads, might help lower the use of methods that might be seen as controversial.

These strategies will help businesses deal with the tricky moral issues that come up with social media marketing and still be successful while building trust with their customers (De Regt *et al.* 2020, pp.168-179).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This part will talk about the study's main points, what it added that other studies didn't, what it couldn't do, and how it is thought the food industry could use social media for marketing. Further, in this chapter researcher will connect all of the analysis's threads and thesis.

Moreover, the objectives and the research problem have been summarized based on the literature review and the survey. Also, at the end of this chapter, a suitable recommendation has been provided regarding social media influencer marketing in the food industry.

5.2 CONCLUSION ON OBJECTIVES

What are the current social media marketing strategies implemented in the food industry?

According to the survey, influencer marketing is a major aspect of food industry social media marketing. With influencers' power and fame, brands can actually sell goods. It works nicely on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Food marketing on social media has pros and cons. Platforms help to engage with clients directly and reach people worldwide, but staying honest, using algorithms, and handling negative comments may be difficult. Social media marketing ultimately influences food industry behaviour. The survey found that influencer and user recommendations influence buying decisions. This shows why corporations must sell ethically to gain customers' trust.

What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing social media marketing strategies in the food industry?

The study's findings show that market-driven by influential people on social media is very common in the food business and has a big effect on what customers do. Further, the research also showed how important social media marketing is for the food business, especially tactics that use people with a lot of followers. Additionally, it lists the benefits and drawbacks of these strategies and displays how they greatly change the way customers behave. It's still very important to care about right and wrong and be honest. Overall, the results show that social media marketing has a big impact on both customer decisions and business practices. This means that it needs to be looked into more and people need to be moral about taking part in marketing campaigns.

What is the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer behaviour?

People need to trust to stay in the digital marketing world, which is always changing. This shows how important it is to be honest in their marketing. More study should be done to fix the issues and help people understand better in such a competitive market.

The literature review has been developed after an extensive review of the different data of regarding social media influencer marketing and the impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour. In addition, the secondary research has demonstrated that the Honeycomb model provides useful practical insights in such a dynamic digital world, and its six blocks help to understand social media marketing which finally builds significant consumer connections and achieves business sustainability. Apart from that the RACE model also has been analysed and the main reason to use this model in marketing is interconnections with the target audience. Through a deep understanding of the target audience behaviours, businesses may customise their strategies in order to present appropriate content that will attract more attention and foster consumer loyalty.

By focusing on the important role of relationships with peers, this study makes it easier to understand how hard it can be to use social media to sell food.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media influencer marketing has made a significant transformation during the last ten years and has developed into a crucial component of digital marketing strategy as a means of connecting with potential consumers therefore it is recommended to **utilize multiple social media platforms** such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, etc. to attract more target audience.

It is also recommended to build and maintain **long-term relationships** with influencers, celebrities, and food bloggers who have the potential to build connections and attract consumers' attention (Kim and Kim, 2021).

In order to increase followers and brand awareness it is recommended to **plan giveaways**.

Influencers and consumers' feedback experience - it is also recommended to engage with consumers because they can give constructive feedback and ideas for brand improvement. It is demonstrated that consumers are more likely to purchase when the brand is active on social media. Their experience will increase the target audience, and more users will recognize the brand (Liu et al., 2021).

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The sample size (52 respondents) and range of traits for the study were small, so the data couldn't be used as many times. Moreover, the short term of academic research also had an impact on the research. Answer bias could also happen if only self-reported data was used, and the way the poll was set up could leave out more complicated points of view.

This needs to be looked into more in the future so that we can learn more about how to sell food businesses on social media. A rather complex methodological mix method has been chosen that also takes time to validate existing information and analyse collected data.

5.5 FUTURE WORK

Future research would be aimed at different topics such as integrated marketing communications and off-line promotion. Moreover, collecting data from a different country to gain a deeper understanding of it is suggested. Finally, future research is recommended to use quantitative approaches to obtain accurate numerical data and develop the strategic framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS/AREAS FOR FURTHER/FUTURE RESEARCH

- There are scopes to get a better picture of a wider range of acts and points of view by making sure that the sample includes people from a lot of different groups.
- To get all the information there is a need and be sure about results are right, use both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- With a long-term study, businesses can see how customer activity and social media trends change over time.
- Talk to people who know a lot about the food business to learn more and put the advertising plans into action.
- To keep people believing the brand and business, be clear about how to act when working with influencers.

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APPENDIX:

An Exploration Of The Issues And Challenges Of Social Media Influencer Marketing: Strategies, Effectiveness, And Ethical Considerations

QUESTIONNAIRE

Closed-Ended Questions

Likert Scale Questions (Rate from 1 to 5: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. The food industry effectively utilizes social media for marketing their products.
2. Social media marketing by food brands influences my food choices and purchases.
3. I trust food recommendations and reviews shared on social media platforms.

Multiple Choice Questions

s Which social media platform do you think is most effectively used by the food industry for marketing?

- A) Instagram
- B) Facebook
- C) YouTube
- D) Twitter
- E) TikTok

s What type of social media marketing strategy attracts you the most when it comes to food products?

- A) Influencer collaborations
- B) User-generated content campaigns
- C) Giveaways and contests

- D) Informative content (e.g., recipes, food facts)

s How do you usually discover new food products or brands on social media?

- A) Through influencer endorsements
- B) Via targeted ads
- C) Through friends' recommendations/posts
- D) By following food-related accounts

s In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge for food brands using social media marketing?

- A) Standing out in a crowded market
- B) Maintaining authenticity and trust
- C) Navigating negative feedback or reviews
- D) Keeping up with changing platform algorithms

Open-Ended Questions

1. Which social media platform do you most associate with food industry marketing?
2. What type of content influences your food purchases the most?
3. Biggest challenge for food brands on social media?
4. One word to describe your feeling towards food ads on social media?