

FROM FEED TO FOOD: EXAMINING INSTAGRAM INFLUENCER EFFECTS ON GEN Z'S DINE-OUT PREFERENCES

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Abstract—Recently, influencer marketing on Instagram has emerged as a popular marketing tool in the food and restaurant sector, particularly among Generation Z consumers. As the use of social media is on the rise, Gen Z consumers are heavily dependent on influencers for recommendations regarding dining experiences, restaurants, and food. This study investigates the effect of Instagram influencer marketing on Gen Z consumers dine-out behaviour, specifically concentrating on the influence of influencer content on awareness, preference, and dining behaviour. A descriptive research design was employed, and primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire from 60 participants belonging to Generation Z. Secondary data was gathered from journals, articles, and internet sources. The gathered data was processed for analysis using percentage analysis and graphical representation. The results indicate that Instagram influencers are a crucial factor in influencing dine-out decisions, particularly because of their visual appeal, credibility, and authenticity.

Keywords: *Instagram Influencer Marketing, Generation Z, Dine-out Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media Marketing, Restaurant Marketing, Purchase Decision.*

Introduction:

In recent years, Instagram has been identified as one of the most popular and influential social media platforms, which has a significant impact on consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions, particularly among Generation Z. Influencer marketing on Instagram has been identified as a highly influential marketing tool for restaurants and food brands, as influencers post their dining-out experiences, reviews, and visually appealing content. Gen Z, being a digital native and highly active on social media platforms, tends to follow influencer recommendations while selecting restaurants and dining options. Authenticity, credibility, and relatability of influencers tend to have a significant impact on their preferences and dining decisions. It is important to understand the impact of Instagram influencer marketing on Gen Z's dine-out behaviour to develop effective marketing strategies. The purpose of this study is to analyse the influence of Instagram influencers on Gen Z's dine-out behaviour.

Statement of the problem

The growing trend of using Instagram influencers for food and restaurant recommendations has brought a significant change in the dine-out decision-making process for Generation Z. Although influencer marketing is a common practice among restaurants, there is a lack of knowledge about the impact of influencer marketing on Gen Z's dine-out behaviour. This research paper attempts to explore the impact of Instagram influencer marketing on Gen Z's dining habits, restaurant choice, and dine-out frequency. The study aims to determine the extent to which influencers influence consumer behaviour and assist marketers in understanding the effectiveness of influencer marketing-based promotional strategies.

Scope of the study

The research targets Generation Z consumers who are actively using Instagram and interacting with influencer content related to food and dining. The research will target the impact of Instagram influencers on restaurant awareness, dining frequency, and purchase intention. The research will only target a sample of respondents within a geographical area and will not target other social media platforms such as YouTube or TikTok. The results of the research will target offering insights to restaurant owners, marketers, and influencers.

Literature review

Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) – Influencer credibility was found to have a significant effect on young female consumers' purchase intentions because of the perceived authenticity and relatability of the influencers. This implies that influencer credibility is an important factor in Gen Z's consumption behavior, including eating out.

Lou & Yuan (2019) – The study found that influencer credibility, informativeness, and attractiveness have a positive effect on consumer trust and purchase intention. Trust serves as a mediator between influencer content and behavioural outcomes such as restaurant visits.

Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020) – The study showed that perceived influencer authenticity positively influences followers' engagement and intention to follow recommendations, which can influence experiential consumption behaviour such as eating out.

Jin & Phua (2014) – The study found that social media endorsements by influencers positively influence brand attitude and purchase intention, especially among younger generations who seek peer-like recommendations.

De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders (2017) – The study concluded that influencers with a larger number of followers can increase brand awareness and perceived popularity, which can be a form of social proof influencing the decision to visit a restaurant.

Objectives

- To study the role of Instagram influencer marketing in shaping Gen Z's dine-out behaviour.
- To identify how consumers feel about gender-neutral cosmetics ads and what they prefer.

Research methodology

For this study, a quantitative research methodology with a descriptive and explanatory design will be employed to explore the effect of Instagram influencer marketing on dine-out behavior among Gen Z. The descriptive part of the research aims to explore the extent of engagement and exposure to influencer content among Generation Z, while the explanatory part explores the relationship between influencer-related variables (credibility, authenticity, and trust) and dine-out behaviour. A deductive methodological strategy is employed for this research, where hypotheses are formed based on the existing body of knowledge and tested using primary data collected through a cross-sectional survey design.

Sampling technique

Convenience sampling method is used to select respondents.

Sample size

The sample consists of 60 responders.

Sources of Data

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from journals, books, reports, and reliable websites.

Tools for Data Analysis

Percentage analysis, frequency distribution, and graphical representation were used for data analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

BASIS	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age group	Below 18	6	10%
	18-20	28	46.7%
	21-23	17	28.3%
	24-26	9	15%
Gender	Male	33	54.2%
	Female	25	42.4%
	Prefer not to say	2	3.4%
Monthly pocket money/Spending capacity	Below 1000	8	13.3%
	1000-3000	21	35%
	3000-5000	12	20%
	5000-10000	12	20%
	Above 10000	7	11.7%

(Source: Primary data)

Interpretation: The survey sample is largely dominated by young adults, with nearly 75% of the respondents belonging to the age group of 18-23 years, which clearly indicates that the results are largely a representation of the youth. Only a few respondents belong to the age group below 18 years and above 23 years. The gender ratio is relatively balanced, with a slight dominance of males (54.2%) over females (42.4%). Regarding the spending capacity, the majority of the respondents belong to the ₹1000-5000 category, which indicates moderate spending capacity.

Table 2: Influence of Instagram influencer marketing in Dine-out behaviour

STATEMENT	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Influencers' posts make me more interested in trying a restaurant.	Strongly Agree	6	10%
	Agree	18	30%
	Neutral	20	33.33%
	Disagree	10	16.67%
	Strongly Disagree	6	10%
I trust food recommendations by influencers.	Strongly Agree	2	3.33%
	Agree	12	20%
	Neutral	25	41.67%
	Disagree	14	23.33%
	Strongly Disagree	7	11.67%
	Strongly Agree	7	11.67%
	Agree	19	31.67%

I follow influencers who post dining-out content.	Neutral	16	26.67%
	Disagree	9	15%
	Strongly Disagree	9	15%
I am more likely to visit a restaurant if a popular influencer promotes it.	Strongly Agree	5	8.33%
	Agree	15	25%
	Neutral	17	28.33%
	Disagree	14	23.33%
	Strongly Disagree	9	15%
I prefer restaurants that look visually appealing on Instagram.	Strongly Agree	6	10%
	Agree	16	26.67%
	Neutral	24	40%
	Disagree	9	15%
	Strongly Disagree	5	8.33%

(Source: Primary data)

Interpretation

- A higher proportion of respondents (40%) show positive interest due to influencer posts, though one-third remain neutral, indicating moderate overall influence.
- Trust in influencer recommendations appears relatively low, with the largest group (41.67%) remaining neutral and 35% expressing disagreement.
- A significant portion of respondents (43.34%) follow dining-out influencers, showing strong exposure to such content.
- Only one-third (33.33%) are influenced to visit a restaurant through popular influencer promotions, indicating limited persuasive power.
- While 36.67% prefer visually appealing restaurants, the majority remain neutral, suggesting aesthetics alone do not strongly determine choice.

Table 3: Relationship between influencer marketing and dining frequency

STATEMENT	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
I visit restaurants because of influencer discount codes or offers.	Strongly Agree	4	6.67%
	Agree	10	16.67%
	Neutral	15	25%
	Disagree	14	23.33%
	Strongly Disagree	17	28.33%
I feel social pressure to visit restaurants	Strongly Agree	2	3.33%
	Agree	11	18.33%

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promoted on Instagram.	Neutral	20	33.33%
	Disagree	17	28.33%
	Strongly Disagree	10	16.67%
I am likely to try a new dish or restaurant I see in an influencer's post.	Strongly Agree	5	8.33%
	Agree	16	26.67%
	Neutral	18	30%
	Disagree	15	25%
	Strongly Disagree	6	10%
Influencer posts have changed	Strongly Agree	5	8.33%
	Agree	13	21.67%
My dining-out preferences.	Neutral	18	30%
	Disagree	13	21.67%
	Strongly Disagree	11	18.33%
I plan dine-outs to create content for my own Instagram.	Strongly Agree	3	5%
	Agree	15	25%
	Neutral	12	20%
	Disagree	11	18.33%
	Strongly Disagree	19	31.67%
Instagram influencer content increases how often I dine out.	Strongly Agree	4	6.67%
	Agree	14	23.33%
	Neutral	20	33.33%
	Disagree	11	18.33%
	Strongly Disagree	11	18.33%

(Source: Primary data)

Interpretation

- A majority of respondents (51.66%) disagree or strongly disagree, indicating that influencer discount codes have limited impact on restaurant visits.
- Most respondents do not feel strong social pressure, with 45% disagreeing and 33.33% remaining neutral.
- Responses are fairly balanced, but 35% show positive inclination, suggesting moderate influence on trying new options.
- Opinions are divided, with 40% disagreeing and 30% neutral, indicating influencer content has not significantly changed preferences for most respondents.

- A large proportion (50%) disagree or strongly disagree, showing that content creation is not a primary reason for dining out.
- With 36.66% neutral and 36.66% disagreeing, influencer content does not substantially increase dining frequency for most respondents.

Suggestion

1. **Emphasize Authentic Content:** Restaurants can partner with influencers who share authentic and genuine content, as the trust level with influencers is moderate.
2. **Improve Visuals:** As visual appeal is a factor in influencing preferences, restaurants can improve their presentation, décor, and settings that appeal to the youth.
3. **Leverage Targeted Promotions:** Restaurants can create value-based promotions and experiences that have a higher engagement level than mere discount offers.
4. **Engage with Customer-Generated Content:** Restaurants can encourage customers to share their experiences on social media through contests and interactive campaigns.
5. **Develop a Long-Term Brand Perception:** Influencer marketing can be done in a way that combines quality service and customer satisfaction, as long-term preferences are influenced more by experiences than promotions.

Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that the impact of Instagram influencer marketing on the restaurant selection of young consumers is moderate. Although the posting of content by influencers and visually appealing content creates interest and awareness, it does not have a strong impact on the final decision of dining out. Trust in the recommendations of influencers is still cautious, and most people retain a neutral position towards the content.

Although some people are ready to try out new restaurants and new dishes promoted by influencers, discount codes, social pressure, and content creation are not strong factors that influence changes in dining frequency and preference.

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