

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON SUSTAINABLE FOOD HABITS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract:

Social media influencers are individuals who have a large number of followers, and they play a significant role in promoting and reviewing products based on their personal experiences, thereby shaping public behaviour, perception, and taste. However, sustainability is a Global concern and requirement nowadays. Influencers should always think twice before giving a review, as people will follow them and start consuming food based on their perspectives. The influencers reach their followers with the help of multiple platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter etc., Due to the trend that social media influencers are very successful, they have left behind traditional advertisements. The reason is that they directly access the audience or viewers with relatability and authenticity.

Keywords: Social media, food, influencers, habits, reviews, taste.

Introduction:

Social media influencers are individuals who have gained a large number of followers such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. They have become a huge force in marketing new products or existing products in the market. This will happen by promoting the products and the service to their followers. It has both positive and negative consequences since most of the followers follow their influencers.

But are they influencing sustainable food Habits? We need to think. In today's world, social media has become a part of everybody's life by giving ideas, information about everything related to daily way of life. The social media influencers can significantly impact sustainable food habits by creating awareness, driving consumer behaviour, as well as acting as intermediaries for healthy habits, ethical choices, or inadvertently guiding unhealthy practices

by giving misinformation. But most of the social media influencers can build trust and provide concerns on the product transparency, and strike a balance between the impulsive consumption and conscious selection of healthy food products. The influencers act as a relatable source, creating a trust gap by giving information on sustainable food habits.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

- To know the demographic profile of consumers having sustainable food habits.
- To understand the Impact of social media influencers on sustainable food habits
- To suggest that the awareness of sustainable food habits is influenced by social media influencers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Ana Cristina Munaro, Renato Hübner Barcelos, Eliane Cristine Francisco Maffezzoli**, Dec 2024, Vol 52, Pags 401to 415 stated that social media influencers can help in shaping attitudes toward sustainable consumption of food. The effectiveness of followers can shape buying intentions for sustainable food, which helps create a green environment. The consumer's personal choice can significantly impact sustainable food habits. This article presents a research agenda for future generations.
2. **Berlin Sachu, Jayaseelan Rathinaswamy** (Sachu.B, S. K, & R. J) ISSN:2581-7930 (Online), Impact Factor: 7.270, Vol 08, No. 03(I), Jul-Sep 2025, pp 165-175 mentioned that the food-related content increased on Instagram with creativity and narration to attract followers, which has also become a strong medium of visual communication. The influencers create content related to traditional recipes, personal transformation stories, and health-oriented diets with trendy explanations, rather than nutritional advice. This content makes the followers engaged and follow the same. This study concludes on Instagram influencers with their buying behaviour and parasocial interaction.
3. **Bayan Aljahdali** Vol. 27(4s) Dec (2024) said that social media platforms like YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, etc., become popular through influencers with their popularity, diet, lifestyle, and trending food. When it comes to influencing the consumer in all aspects, Social media is also becoming an important tool to impress and follow. Their study also contributes to digital marketing, which is a growing field.

4. **Jyoti Mallya, Dilip K, Vidya Patwardhan, and Kaiappan S**, 2024, Vol. 10, no. 1, 2391016 (2024) stated that dedicated social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube contribute to many factors that can have content about the food that has developed over decades. Therefore, impulsive eating can be understood as a behaviour motivated by a desire to satisfy psychological needs through food consumption, frequently under the influence of social media. This concludes with a diplomatic end, while some say social media influences people to consume more junk food; on the other hand, many feel social media creates awareness of healthy food habits.
5. **Herath, Wanigasuriya**, Page/Article: 29-51 Vol 9| No.1| January (2025) explained that credible social media influencers can affect the intention of consumers to buy the nutritious and healthy food items by advocating and representing the choices of health conscious in an authentic manner. The influencers can influence the purchasing intention of healthy food products and provide valuable insights for marketers to promote healthy choices. This study ends with the credibility of future researchers for their long-term methods towards buyers' behaviour.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine consumers' perception of Social Media Influencer attributes with respect to sustainable food habits in Chennai.
- To analyse the influence of Social Media Influencer attributes on sustainable food habits among consumers using appropriate statistical techniques.
- To identify the most significant Social Media Influencer attributes that contribute to the adoption of sustainable food habits among consumers in the study area.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media Influencer Attributes with respect to Sustainable Food Habits – Mean Analysis

- The questionnaire comprised twelve statements representing four Social Media Influencer attributes, with three statements assigned to each attribute, to assess sustainable food habits. All statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Consumers' perceptions of these attributes were evaluated through mean analysis as part of the descriptive statistical techniques.

**Table 1: Social Media Influencer Attributes with respect to Sustainable Food Habits
– Mean Analysis**

VARIABLES	N	Mean	SD
Credibility	150	8.84	4.052
Expertise	150	9.68	3.558
Content Quality	150	10.89	2.836
Behavioural Inspiration	150	8.03	4.455
Social Media Influencer Attributes for Sustainable Food Habits	150	37.44	9.584

❖ **Source: Primary Data**

- The mean analysis indicates that consumers hold a generally favourable perception of social media influencer attributes in shaping sustainable food habits. As each attribute was measured using three statements on a five-point Likert scale, the maximum possible score for each dimension is 15. Content Quality recorded the highest mean score of 10.89, which corresponds to approximately 72.6 per cent of the maximum score, suggesting that well-presented, clear, and engaging influencer content strongly supports sustainable food-related decisions. Expertise followed with a mean score of 9.68 (64.5 per cent), reflecting a positive perception of influencers' knowledge and understanding of sustainable food practices.
- Credibility obtained a mean score of 8.84 (58.9 per cent), indicating a moderate level of trust and perceived authenticity among consumers. Behavioural Inspiration reported the lowest mean score of 8.03 (53.5 per cent), showing comparatively lesser but still acceptable influence in motivating actual behavioural change. Overall, the combined mean score for all twelve statements was 37.44 out of a maximum possible score of 60, representing 62.4 per cent, which reflects a reasonably positive perception of social media influencer attributes in promoting sustainable food habits among consumers in Chennai.

Social Media Influencer Attributes and Sustainable Food Habits – Independent Sample ‘t’ Test

- H_0 : There is no significant difference between Male and Female Consumers with respect to Social Media Influencer Attributes and their influence on Sustainable Food Habits.

- An independent-samples t-test was employed to examine whether male and female consumers differ significantly in their perceptions of Social Media Influencer (SMI) attributes and their influence on sustainable food habits.

Table 2: Gender - Social Media Influencer Attributes and Sustainable Food Habits

VARIABLES	Gender						t – value	p – value
	Male			Female				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
SMI Attributes	82	38.51	4.257	68	35.69	6.841	4.814	0.000**
Sustainable Food habits	82	21.48	2.650	68	20.11	3.587	2.987	0.009**

Source: Primary Data

❖ (**1% level of Significance)

- The results reveal that male consumers reported a higher mean score for SMI attributes (Mean = 38.51, SD = 4.257) compared to female consumers (Mean = 35.69, SD = 6.841). The obtained t-value of 4.814 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates statistical significance at the 1 per cent level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for SMI attributes. Similarly, with respect to sustainable food habits, male consumers exhibited a higher mean score (Mean = 21.48, SD = 2.650) than female consumers (Mean = 20.11, SD = 3.587).
- The corresponding t-value of 2.987 and p-value of 0.009 confirm a significant gender-based difference at the 1 per cent level. These findings clearly indicate that male consumers perceive a stronger influence from social media influencer attributes and demonstrate relatively higher adoption of sustainable food habits compared to their female counterparts in the study area (Chennai).

Social Media Influencer Attributes and Sustainable Food Habits – Correlation Analysis

- **H₀: There is no significant relationship between Social Media Influencer Attributes and Sustainable Food habits among consumers.**
- A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was undertaken to examine the relationship between Social Media Influencer (SMI) attributes and sustainable food

habits among consumers. The results reveal a strong and positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.788$), indicating that higher perceptions of social media influencer attributes are associated with stronger adoption of sustainable food habits.

Table 3: Social Media Influencer Attributes and Sustainable Food Habits – Correlation Analysis

VARIABLE	N	'r' VALUE	P VALUE	RELATIONSHIP	REMARKS	
					SIGNIFICANT	RESULT
SMI Attributes and Sustainable Food Habits	150	0.788**	0.001	Positive	Significant	Rejected

❖ (Primary Data **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level)

Impact of Social Media Influencer Attributes on Sustainable Food Habits - Multiple Regression Analysis

- Multiple regression analysis was applied to identify the combined and individual influence of the four Social Media Influencer attributes on sustainable food habits among consumers. The overall regression model was found to be highly significant, as indicated by the F-value of 239.487 with a p-value less than 0.01, confirming a strong explanatory power of the independent variables. The adjusted R-square value of 0.788 reveals that approximately 78.8 per cent of the variation in sustainable food habits is explained by the four influencer attributes taken together. This indicates that Social Media Influencer characteristics play a substantial role in shaping consumers' sustainable food-related behaviours.

Table 4: Impact of Social Media Influencer Attributes on Sustainable Food Habits – Multiple Regression Analysis Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.368	.547		8.541	.000
	Credibility	.161	.084	.172	2.335	.023*
	Expertise	.266	.079	.285	2.874	.004**

	Content Quality	.507	.071	.327	5.321	.000**
	Behavioural	.082	.093	.063	1.067	.189
	Inspiration					

Dependent Variable: Sustainable Food habits

- An examination of individual regression coefficients shows that Content Quality emerged as the most influential predictor of sustainable food habits ($\beta = 0.327$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of clear, engaging, and appealing influencer content in encouraging sustainable eating practices.
- Expertise also exerted a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that consumers are more likely to adopt sustainable food habits when influencers demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of sustainability-related issues. Credibility showed a positive and statistically significant effect at the 5 per cent level ($\beta = 0.172$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that trust and perceived authenticity moderately contribute to behavioural outcomes. In contrast, Behavioural Inspiration did not show a significant impact ($\beta = 0.063$, $p > 0.05$), implying that inspirational appeal alone may not be sufficient to directly influence sustainable food habits without supportive informational and content-related factors.

Suggestion:

- The study helps us to rectify human needs towards sustainable food.
- Influencers should be more concerned about the product they prefer
- Influencer should reduce the spread of awareness of food waste and storing leftover food, and planning meals properly.
- Influencers should always prefer promoting eco-friendly products, reusable products, recyclable products, biodegradable products, etc.

Conclusion

- We found that most of the customers have given random responses.
- Instead of this, they might have given honest reviews, which might have provided even more accurate data.
- People should think before buying a product outside, whether it's really needed or not.

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