

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING TOWARDS STREET FOOD CULTURE IN PUDUCHERRY – A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TEENAGERS

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Abstract

Purpose: The present research proposes to look at the influence of social media influencer marketing on the street food culture in Puducherry, particularly regarding the dietary patterns of adolescents. Puducherry, recognized for its varied culinary heritage, has been noted to display some of the most detrimental eating habits among teenagers attributed to the rising intake of filthy and hazardous street foods. In recent years, social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat have significantly influenced teenagers' food preferences. Influencers frequently endorse street food establishments via aesthetically pleasing material, critiques, and suggestions, significantly impacting teenagers' tastes and consumption behaviors. This tendency fosters the expansion of street food enterprises, although it simultaneously prompts apprehensions regarding health, hygiene, and nutritional understanding among teens.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the role of social media influencer marketing in shaping teenagers' eating behaviours, particularly in relation to street food culture in Puducherry. The focus is on understanding how influencer-driven content impacts food preferences and tastes among teenagers. A structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to 200 teenagers using convenience sampling method.

Findings: The researcher found that 70.5 per cent of the respondents agreed for the statement "I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself", also the study included 51 per cent of boys. And the second most used social media app being YouTube by the Teenagers with 20 per cent.

Keywords: Teenagers, Influencers', Marketing, Street Foods, Behaviours, Preference, Tastes, Consumption.

Introduction

Social media has changed how people communicate, make decisions, and interact, especially teens. With the development of Instagram, YouTube, and snapchat, food marketing has moved from traditional advertising to influencer-driven promotions. Beautiful material and engaging reviews have made influencers influential trendsetters who change their followers' choices and consumption habits. Due to social media, street food culture has grown significantly. In Puducherry, known for its diverse cuisine and vibrant street food scene, teens are increasingly lured to online street food ads. The bright visual representation of street foods, from crispy nibbles to fusion specialties, has increased their popularity among young customers. However, health studies and surveys have documented poor eating habits in Puducherry teens due to their frequent consumption of high-calorie, fatty, and unsanitary street food. Influencer marketing and internet interaction have made teens emphasize the taste and trends over nutrition and food safety, leading to unhealthy diets. Despite social media's rising influence on food choices, scholarly research on how influencer marketing affects Puducherry teens' street food consumption is scarce. Understanding this relationship is crucial to addressing public health problems and promoting street food online with nutritional understanding and hygiene. Thus, this study examines how social media influencer

marketing affects teens' street food preferences, health, and lifestyle. It aims to help parents, educators, politicians, food vendors, and influencers promote a more responsible and health-conscious approach while preserving Puducherry's rich street food tradition.

Significance of the Study

This study examines how social media influencer marketing affects street food culture and teens eating habits in Puducherry, a city with some of the worst young eating habits. Social media and influencers expose teenagers to interesting street food content and trends. Such promotions encourage local street food but cause sanitary, nutritional, and health issues. We explore how influencer-driven marketing affects teens' food tastes to raise awareness of social media's impact on diet and encourage a balanced street food diet. The study also helps Puducherry public health officials promote healthy eating and street food vendors understand hygiene and quality. It also stresses social media influencers and advertisers' ethical need to promote food content responsibly and respect public health. This study promotes Puducherry's thriving street food culture and encourages youths to eat healthier by connecting digital marketing trends with teenagers health.

Statement of the Problem

Puducherry attracts tourists and blends cultures. Known for its bustling street food scene. Street food attracts locals and tourists with its affordable and good food. But recent studies and health reports suggest a worrying rise of unhealthy dietary habits, especially among Puducherry teens. The rise of unhealthy, fatty, and high-calorie street food has raised concerns about teens' obesity, digestive ailments, and lifestyle-related health issues. The rapid increase of social media influencers' marketing influences how individuals eat. Influencers promote street food businesses on Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat with amusing videos, reels, and reviews. Teens who use these sites often follow influencers' health advice more than traditional counsel. More individuals are eating street food due to digital impact, frequently without knowing its health or cleanliness. However, there is no scholarly research on how social media influencers' marketing that affects teens' food tastes and eating habits, particularly in Puducherry's street food culture. People don't know how these diets will influence their health, making the problem worse. This study seeks to fill the gap by examining how social media influencers affect Puducherry teenagers eating habits, specifically street food culture. Understand this link to promote culture, employ influencer marketing, and get teens to eat healthier.

Objectives of the Study

This study's main goal is to look at how social media influencer marketing and affects the street food culture and eating habits of teenagers in Puducherry. To be more specific, the study aims to:

1. To analyze whether teenagers' money spending has an impact on street foods suggested by the influencer seen in social media apps.
2. To examine the factors influencing street food consumption among teenagers.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. H_{01} : There is no significant between factors influencing street food consumption among teenagers' and money spent by teenagers for street foods.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant difference between Street Foods Tried as suggested by the Influencer seen in Social Media Apps and factors influencing street food consumption among teenagers.
3. H_{03} : There is no significant difference between Social Media Platforms Viewing among Teenagers and Factors Influencing Street Food Consumption among Teenagers

Research Methodology

Either the process of sampling or the meticulous documentation of the results are included in the data gathering process. To guarantee that the study is successful, it is necessary to collect the appropriate data. This research was conducted in a setting that was representative of the actual world, and it evaluated the survey participants' level of commitment influence in several different domains.

Sample Design

The approaches of random samples were used to get the main data. Structured questionnaire was used for teenagers to perform a field survey. The teenagers participating in the trial is using convenience sampling method, with 200 as sample size.

S.No	Areas	No. of Teenagers
1	French Streets	66
2	Rock Beach – Starting, Middle and End	68
3	Pondy Marina	66
Total		200

Based on Primary Data

The sample size has been classified into three zones of Puducherry comprising French streets and Pondy marina zone with 66 teenagers and from Rock Beach – Starting, Middle and End it has been taken as 68 as the teenagers visiting is more comparative to all other zones.

(Source: Pre-Test)

Statistical Tools

This study used ANOVA, descriptive statistics, and simple percentage analysis to examine how social media influencer marketing promotes street food culture and affects Puducherry teens' eating habits. The basic percentage method summarized demographics and social media usage, whereas descriptive statistics explained teens' influencer marketing and street food eating habits. ANOVA was used to determine if gender and monthly pocket money affect social media marketing influence.

Review of Literature

Briliana, et al., (2021), the purpose of this study was to better understand how Millennials' attitudes regarding food vlogger online reviews, authenticity, historical nostalgia, and the usability of mobile communication technologies affect their decisions to buy local street food. Almost everywhere in the world, YouTube has emerged as the most widely used tool for sharing videos. A lot of YouTubers compete to produce different kinds of content, including food-related ones. Food vloggers are YouTubers who create food-related material by reviewing meals from a certain location. Purposive sampling was employed, and questionnaires were given to Millennials who purchase through mobile applications in order to gather data.

Ingrassia, et al., (2022), Using influencers to promote products and services is becoming a successful open innovation communication technique. Their Instagram account lets them reach millions of followers globally. Chiara Ferragni, one of the most endorsed influencers worldwide, launched a communication campaign to promote Italian food and tourist destinations, including cities of art, seaside, ski, and countryside sites, thermal baths, museums, galleries, and hotels, in response to the economic crisis that hit Italy after the Covid-19 pandemic. This study explores Chiara Ferragni's Instagram activity and communication strategy to promote Italian tourism attractions and "local food & wine." It evaluated local cuisine as an evocative feature in tourist destination evaluation and its usefulness in diverse circumstances. Netnographic analysis was used

to view hundreds of Instagram posts by the influencer. The AGIL model (Adaption, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latent pattern maintenance) was then used to assess this communication campaign's effectiveness in rejuvenating the tourist catering business. The paper proposes a revolutionary open innovation strategy to support food and catering businesses.

Gross, et al., (2022), Although sponsored postings by social media influencers (SMIs) on Instagram have become a popular advertising approach, there is limited evidence on their effectiveness. Sponsored posts appear alongside non sponsored posts (NSPs) on SMIs' Instagram profiles. This study compares consumer engagement with sponsored posts to NSPs and determines differences between micro and macro influencers. We examine engagement with sponsored posts based on advertising strategy, using factual and rational information (informational appeals) or emotional and personal information (transformational appeals). We found using a binomial regression on a unique data set of 64,438 sponsored Instagram posts by SMIs that users engage more with sponsored than NSPs, particularly micro influencers and macro influencers' sponsored posts with informational appeals outperform micro influencers'. These findings are useful for advertisers considering influencer marketing and SMIs considering sponsored posts. They also enhance the literature on influencer advertising and marketing.

Saputro, et al., (2023), Influencer marketing is one option for firms to market their products as technology advances. It expands product information and boosts client interaction. To reach customer engagement goals, influencers require a sound approach. This research investigates Adam's influencer marketing technique on minke's TikTok account to boost customer interaction. This case study research is qualitative. This research also uses observation, interviews, and documentation. Data gathering, reduction, and conclusion display are data analysis methods. This research shows that Adam's influencer strategy is good since he works hard to build his credibility and increase engagement. This research should academically impact influencer marketing techniques to increase client involvement, like Adam did.

Zhou, et al., (2024), The purpose of this study is to investigate street food consumers' decision-making strategies (CDMS). In addition to the standard CDMS components, two supplementary components were included based on relevant literature: food safety concerns and environmental hazards. This research looks at how social media celebrities (SMCs) could help bridge the gap between intentions and actions when it comes to eating street cuisine. Three hundred people filled out the online survey, and the results are useable. Data was analyzed using partial least squares (PLS) technique. Out of the eight Consumer Decision-Making Styles (CDMS) that were identified, six were found to have a significant impact on consumers' intention to buy street foods: recreational (hedonistic shopping consciousness), price knowledge, novelty-seeking, spontaneity, confusion due to over-choice, and loyalty to a brand.

Table 1
Age of the Teenagers

S.No	Age	No. of Teenagers	Percentage
1	Upto 13 years	102	51
2	14 to 16 years	52	26
3	17 to 19 years	46	23
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 shows the data of 102 teenagers which is 51 per cent are "Up to 13 years old", this indicates that over half of the teenagers in the study are early teens. The second-largest age group is 14 to 16 years as 26 per cent with 52 teenagers, followed by 17 to 19 years were 23 per cent of teenagers.

Table 2
Gender of the Teenagers

S.No	Gender	No. of Teenagers	Percentage
1	Boys	102	51
2	Girls	98	49
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 highlights the data that 51 per cent of the 200 teens were boys and 49 per cent which is 98 were girls. This means that the sample is approximately evenly split between men and women, which means that both genders are represented fairly in the study.

Table 3
Money Spent on Street Foods by Teenagers (Per Week)

S.No	Money Spent	No. of Teenagers	Percentage
1	Upto Rs. 200	06	3
2	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	16
3	More than Rs. 351	162	81
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 The data suggests that a significant proportion of teenagers, 81 per cent, spend more than ₹351, emphasizing a trend of relatively high expenditure. Only 3 per cent of teenagers spend up to ₹200, while a smaller group, 16 per cent, spend between ₹201 and ₹350. This demonstrates that most of teens spend a greater amount of money, with only a small number of them maintaining their expenses at a lower level.

Table 4
Social Media Platforms Viewing among Teenagers

S.No	Social media Apps	No. of Teenagers	Percentage
1	You Tube	41	20
2	Instagram	151	76
3	Snap Chat	08	4
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 The data demonstrates that 76 per cent of teenagers in Puducherry actively use Instagram, making it the most popular social networking site among teens, followed by YouTube is the second most popular site, with 20 per cent which is 41 respondents, and Snapchat is the least popular, with only 4 per cent. These results show that Instagram is the best medium for changing teens' food tastes and eating habits because it is the most popular way for influencers to promote street food.

Table 5
Street Foods Tried as suggested by the Influencer seen in Social Media Apps

S.No	Snacks	No. of Teenagers	Percentage
1	Waffles	42	21
2	Brownies	46	23
3	Fries	5	2
4	Mojito	12	6
5	Macarons and Croissants	41	21
6	Night Biriyan	54	27
Total		200	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 shows the street foods suggested by social media influencers, out of the 200 teenagers who were participated in the study, 27 per cent have reported that mostly teens try for Night Biryani, 46 respondents which is 23 per cent were trying brownies and 21 per cent of the teens go for waffles. In a similar vein, 6 per cent chose mojitos, 21 per cent handful of them experimented with macarons and croissants. Only 2 per cent of the respondents tried fries. According to these, social media advertisements pushed by influencers have a significant impact on the street food preferences of Puducherry youths.

Table 6
Factors Influencing Street Food Consumption among Teenagers

S.No	Factors	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Total
1	I follow social media influencers regularly to explore new street food options.	100	43	7	24	26	200
		50	21.5	3.5	12	13	100
2	Social media influencers influence my decision to try new street food outlets.	40	108	12	26	14	200
		20	54	6	13	7	100
3	I trust the recommendations and reviews shared by influencers about street food.	68	79	23	25	5	200
		34	39.5	11.5	12.5	2.5	100
4	Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food.	82	41	57	11	9	200
		41	20.5	28.5	5.5	4.5	100
5	I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself.	41	141	8	6	4	200
		20.5	70.5	4	3	2	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 highlights that the Out of 200, teenagers' perceptions of social media influencer marketing in influencing street food selections in Puducherry. "I follow social media influencers regularly to explore new street food options" 100 teenagers which is 50 per cent strongly agreed that they consistently follow influencers to discover new street food establishments, indicating substantial engagement. "Social media influencers influence my decision to try new street food outlets" 54 per cent have agreed that influencers impact their choices about new street food establishments, underscoring their persuasive influence. Followed by "I trust the recommendations and reviews shared by influencers about street food" 39.5 per cent agreed that they have confidence in reviews and recommendations provided by influencers concerning street food. For the statement "Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food" 4.5 per cent have strongly disagreed that aesthetically pleasing influencer posts increase their desire for street food more frequently. Lastly, for "I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself" A notable 3 per cent have disagreed that they favor visiting food establishments endorsed by influencers over individually discovering them. The findings demonstrate that social media influencers significantly affect teens' tastes, appetites, and purchasing decisions for street food in Puducherry.

Table 7
One-way ANOVA for Money Spent on Street Foods by Teenagers and Factors Influencing Street Food Consumption among Teenagers

Variables	Money Spent on Street Foods	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
I follow social media influencers regularly to explore new street food options.	Upto Rs. 200	06	4.77	1.23	7.256	0.001*
	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	4.25	1.53		
	More than Rs. 351	162	4.87	1.23		
	Total	200	3.56	1.36		
	Upto Rs. 200	06	4.56	1.87	5.256	0.05*

Social media influencers influence my decision to try new street food outlets.	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	4.12	1.99		
	More than Rs. 351	162	4.78	1.78		
	Total	200	4.36	1.45		
I trust the recommendations and reviews shared by influencers about street food.	Upto Rs. 200	06	4.23	1.36	4.037	0.001*
	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	4.69	1.89		
	More than Rs. 351	162	4.98	1.00		
	Total	200	4.99	1.03		
Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food.	Upto Rs. 200	06	4.00	0.96	3.789	0.05*
	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	3.99	1.25		
	More than Rs. 351	162	4.45	1.22		
	Total	200	3.87	0.87		
I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself	Upto Rs. 200	06	3.69	0.89	4.092	0.005*
	Rs. 201 to Rs. 350	32	3.76	1.73		
	More than Rs. 351	162	3.93	1.93		
	Total	200	3.24	1.84		

Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%

The analysis demonstrates notable discrepancies among various expenditure categories about the impact of social media influencers on street food preferences, evidenced by F-values between 3.789 and 7.256 and significance levels ($p < 0.05$). Respondents who expend over ₹351 on street food exhibit elevated agreement levels across all propositions, signifying a heightened influence on their preferences, trust, and desire behaviours. The statistically significant p-values indicate that expenditure levels substantially influence users' interactions with influencer-generated food content. Consequently, the null hypothesis asserting no substantial difference between expenditure and influencer impact on street food selections is rejected.

Table 8

ANOVA for Street Foods Tried as suggested by the Influencer seen in Social Media Apps and factors influencing street food consumption among teenagers.

Variables	Snacks	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
I follow social media influencers regularly to explore new street food options.	Waffles	42	4.77	1.23	3.996	0.10*
	Brownies	46	4.25	1.53		
	Fries	5	4.87	1.23		
	Mojito	12	3.11	0.32		
	Macarons and Croissants	41	4.11	1.02		
	Night Biryani	54	4.25	1.11		
	Total	200	3.99	0.68		
Social media influencers influence my decision to try new street food outlets.	Waffles	42	4.56	1.41	4.986	0.05*
	Brownies	46	4.12	1.63		
	Fries	5	4.78	1.15		
	Mojito	12	4.69	1.60		
	Macarons and Croissants	41	3.69	0.78		
	Night Biryani	54	4.98	1.63		
	Total	200	4.33	1.36		
	Waffles	42	4.23	1.36	5.367	0.005*

I trust the recommendations and reviews shared by influencers about street food.	Brownies	46	4.69	1.89		
	Fries	5	4.46	1.78		
	Mojito	12	4.36	1.23		
	Macarons and Croissants	41	4.12	1.10		
	Night Biryani	54	4.22	1.02		
	Total	200	4.67	1.87		
Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food.	Waffles	42	4.00	0.90	2.789	0.15*
	Brownies	46	3.69	0.75		
	Fries	5	4.85	1.06		
	Mojito	12	3.87	0.45		
	Macarons and Croissants	41	4.21	1.23		
	Night Biryani	54	4.11	1.75		
I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself	Total	200	4.08	0.99	3.492	0.05*
	Waffles	42	3.69	0.89		
	Brownies	46	3.76	0.73		
	Fries	5	3.93	0.93		
	Mojito	12	4.65	1.31		
	Macarons and Croissants	41	3.69	0.65		
	Night Biryani	54	3.99	0.87		
	Total	200	4.00	0.98		

Based on primary data * sig.@5%

The results shows that influencer-driven street food ads elicit different reactions from different snack preference groups, with F-values ranging from 2.789 to 5.367 and p-values generally falling below 0.05. With higher mean scores, respondents who preferred Night Biryani, Waffles, and Brownies were more likely to trust and be influenced by social media advertising. Teenagers who were more into Mojitos and Macarons tended to be diplomatic in their reactions. Results show that different kinds of snacks have different effects on people's susceptibility to food-related social media material. Hence, the claim that influencers' effects on street food consumption are not significantly different from snack preferences is denied.

Table 9

Analysis of Variance for Social Media Platforms Viewing among Teenagers and Factors Influencing Street Food Consumption among Teenagers

Variables	Social media Apps	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
I follow social media influencers regularly to explore new street food options.	You Tube	41	4.99	1.69	10.556	0.001*
	Instagram	151	4.87	1.69		
	Snap Chat	08	4.98	1.75		
	Total	200	4.99	1.85		
Social media influencers influence my decision to try new street food outlets.	You Tube	41	4.87	1.78	11.956	0.001*
	Instagram	151	4.88	1.78		
	Snap Chat	08	4.99	1.98		
	Total	200	4.88	1.93		
I trust the recommendations and reviews shared by influencers about street food.	You Tube	41	4.56	1.47	10.737	0.001*
	Instagram	151	4.66	1.96		
	Snap Chat	08	4.47	1.78		

	Total	200	4.75	1.78		
Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food.	You Tube	41	4.75	1.56	9.289	0.001*
	Instagram	151	4.95	1.69		
	Snap Chat	08	4.66	1.78		
	Total	200	4.65	1.87		
I prefer visiting food outlets promoted by influencers rather than discovering them myself	You Tube	41	4.69	1.78	7.992	0.001*
	Instagram	151	4.67	1.69		
	Snap Chat	08	4.90	1.87		
	Total	200	4.24	1.58		

*Based on Primary Data * Sig.@5%*

The results indicate that the type of social media app substantially influences user reactions to influencer-led street food advertising, as seen by elevated F-values (7.992–11.956) and robust significance levels ($p = 0.001$). Users of Instagram and YouTube exhibit heightened engagement and trust in influencer recommendations, indicating that these visual platforms efficiently stimulate food appetites and exploratory behaviour. Snapchat users, however less in number, exhibit a somewhat moderate influence. The findings substantiate that the selection of platform significantly influences consumer receptiveness to influencer marketing, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Findings of the Study

1. Most of the respondents participated for this study were Up to 13 years old which is 51 per cent.
2. The study includes 49 per cent of the teenagers' girls.
3. The study found that 76 per cent of teenagers use Instagram and gets influenced by the influencer marketing.
4. Most of the respondents which is 27 per cent of the teenagers reported their frequent street food is "Night Biryani".
5. The study identifies that 41 per cent of the teenagers strongly agreed and stated that "Visually appealing posts by influencers make me crave street food".
6. The ANOVA results found notable variations among the various spending categories. Teenagers who spent more than ₹351 were found to be more influenced by social media content when it came to choosing street food and trusting influencers. The results show that the amount of spending has a significant impact on teenagers reaction, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.
7. The study found considerable heterogeneity in snack preference groups' responses to influencer-driven street food advertising, with F-values ranging from 2.789 to 5.367 ($p < 0.05$). Others were moderate, but teenagers who liked Night Biryani, Waffles, and Brownies trusted social media more. Thus, snack preference significantly impacts influencer impact, contradicting the null hypothesis.
8. The research indicates that the category of social media application substantially influences user reactions to influencer-led street food marketing, evidenced by robust F-values (7.992–11.956, $p = 0.001$). Users of Instagram and YouTube exhibit heightened trust and engagement, whereas Snapchat users demonstrate modest influence. Consequently, the selection of platform significantly influences customer behavior, leading to the refutation of the null hypothesis.

Suggestions

1. In order to raise awareness among teenagers, social media influencers should highlight both popular as well as healthy street food options.
2. Even if they savor street food, parents and educators can help them make healthy food choices by raising their nutritional awareness.
3. Due to the fact that influencer marketing attracts teenagers' to their establishments, street food sellers can up their hygiene and quality standards to keep customers' trust.
4. It is imperative that public health officials and lawmakers launch online campaigns to bring attention to the negative effects of eating too much street food on people's health.

Conclusion

From the above study examined shows how social media marketing affects Puducherry teens' regarding street food preferences and eating habits. Results demonstrate that Instagram and YouTube influencers' postings, reviews, and promotions strongly affect most teens. It affects their willingness to try new street cuisine and buy influencer-endorsed products. This trend boosts local street food culture, yet it raises concerns about teens' harmful eating habits. The data reveal that youth trust influencers and are easily seduced by attractive things. Their diet and appetite are greatly affected by this. Using influencers in marketing requires responsibility. Nutrition-conscious influencers should endorse items. Parents, teachers, street food vendors, and officials must collaborate to promote healthier eating and Puducherry's street food culture. This study concludes that teenagers should be careful of digital media, exercise excellent hygiene, and employ balanced marketing to make eating choices healthier.

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