

# From Screens to Plates: The Role of Social Media Marketing in Food Buying Behaviour among Youth

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**Abstract:** *The rapid growth in internet usage has significantly increased the influence of social media on daily life, especially among youth. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snap chat, YouTube, and Facebook have transformed how individuals discover, evaluate, and choose food. Social media marketing, particularly influencer promotions and viral food content, plays a vital role in shaping food preferences and consumption habits such as binge eating.*

*This study examines the impact of social media marketing on youth's food-buying behavior in the Thane region with the help of primary data collected from 107 respondents through structured questionnaires. The hypothesis tested applying One-Sample Proportion Test proved alternate hypothesis stating Social Media marketing significantly influences food habits of adults. The research analyses social media exposure influences eating habits, restaurant visits, and food choices, also study reveals that social media marketing strongly affects youth food-buying behaviour, with many respondents trying new foods after viewing them online. Social media influencers often promote unhealthy and sometimes unhygienic food, which can lead to impulsive food purchases. The study highlights the need for greater awareness and more conscious decision-making when engaging with food-related content on social media.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Influencer, Youth, Food buying behaviour

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the world has witnessed lighting speed growth in the usage of the Internet, which has led to the exposure of social media marketing. Social media has become a important part of daily life and is used by people of all age groups, especially the youth. Social media marketing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are widely used for communication, entertainment, education, and business promotion. Social media allows users to create, share, and consume content in various forms such as photos, videos, reels, and blogs, which strongly influence people's choices, lifestyle, and behaviour.

### Key Highlights of Social Media Influence

#### Wide Usage of Social Media:

Social media is used by almost every age group, but youth are the most active users. They spend a significant amount of time scrolling through content, which influences their daily habits and preferences.

#### Role of Social Media Marketing:

Brands use social media marketing strategies such as paid advertisements, content marketing, brand pages, and influencer marketing to promote products and services. These strategies help in reaching a large audience quickly and effectively.



**Influencer Marketing:**

Influencer marketing is a type of social media marketing where brands collaborate with influencers, bloggers, YouTubers, food vloggers, and celebrities. Since influencers are trusted by their followers, their recommendations strongly impact the food choices and buying behaviour of young consumers.

**Popularity of Food-Related Content:**

Food-related content is one of the most popular categories on social media. Videos and posts related to trending foods, cafés, street food, and food challenges attract millions of views and shares. Trending food items such as Fanta Maggi, Matcha drinks, Dalgona coffee, Sushi, and other viral foods become popular within a short period due to social media exposure.

**Impact on Food Consumption Patterns:**

Food consumption refers to the type, quantity, and frequency of food intake by individuals. Youth often try new and trending food items because they are popular on social media, rather than considering their nutritional value. This increases the consumption of fast food, junk food, and sugary beverages.

**Food Addiction and Behavioural Influence:**

Continuous exposure to attractive food content creates cravings and emotional eating habits among young people. Over time, the repeated urge to consume trending food items can develop into food addiction. Youth may feel the need to follow food trends to gain social approval, post content, and increase their online presence.

**Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media:**

Social media has positive effects such as promoting food businesses, spreading awareness about new cuisines, and sharing cooking ideas. However, it also has negative impacts such as unhealthy eating habits, overconsumption of junk food, neglect of balanced diet, and increased dependency on social media for food choices.

The present study focuses on analysing the influence of social media on food consumption and addiction among youth. It aims to understand how social media platforms, influencer marketing, and viral food trends shape the eating behaviour of young individuals. The study highlights the need for awareness regarding responsible use of social media and the importance of adopting healthy food habits despite the growing influence of online trends.

**Objectives:**

- To examine the impact of social media influence on eating habits.
- To study the role of influencers shape eating habits.
- To know the effects of social media influence towards selection of food preferences.
- To understand most preferred social media platform for food choices or content.

**Hypothesis:**

H<sub>0</sub>: Social Media marketing does not significantly influences food habits of adults.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social Media marketing significantly influences food habits of adults.

**2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

1. **Ali & Shulamite (2025)** studied the influence of social media on young adults' food choices. The main objective of the study was to examine how platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok affect eating habits, food cravings and dietary behaviour among young adults aged 18–29 years. The researchers used a quantitative research design and collected primary data from 203 participants using standardized tools such as the Food Choice Questionnaire (FCQ) and the Social Media Influence on Food Consumption Behavior Scale (SMIFCBS). The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between social media exposure and impulsive eating, increased cravings for junk food, and higher consumption of fast food and calorie-rich snacks. The study also found that females and individuals from lower-income groups were more vulnerable to social media influence on food choices. The study concluded that social media acts as both a risk factor for unhealthy eating behaviours and a potential platform for promoting healthy food awareness among young adults.



2. **Güzeldere et al. (2025)** studied the relationship between social media addiction, food preferences and eating attitudes among young adults. The main objective of the study was to examine how excessive use of social media influences eating behaviour and food choices. The researchers conducted a cross-sectional study on 300 participants aged 18–65 years using an online questionnaire, Social Media Addiction Scale (Adult Form) and Eating Attitude Test (EAT-26). The findings showed a significant positive relationship between social media addiction and disordered eating attitudes, and participants with higher social media addiction were more likely to consume foods frequently seen on social media. The study concluded that overuse of social media can negatively affect eating behaviour and may lead to unhealthy food preferences, highlighting the need for expert-guided nutrition content on social media platforms.

3. **Kaur & Singh(2023)** studied the influence of social media on food consumption behaviour among young adults. The main objective of the study was to analyse how exposure to food-related content on social media platforms affects eating habits, food preferences and purchasing decisions. The researchers used a descriptive research design and collected primary data through a structured questionnaire from young adult respondents. The findings revealed that frequent exposure to food blogs, influencer posts and online food advertisements increased cravings for fast food and sugary beverages, while also influencing brand preferences. The study concluded that social media plays a significant role in shaping young adults’ dietary choices and highlighted the need for promoting healthy eating awareness through digital platforms.

4. **Filippone et al. ( 2022)** studied the relationship between social media exposure, food craving, cognitive impulsivity and cognitive restraint among young adults. The main objective of the study was to understand how time spent on social media influences eating behaviour and food cravings. The researchers collected primary data from 103 young adults using structured questionnaires measuring impulsivity, eating behaviour and food craving. The findings revealed that increased exposure to social media was indirectly associated with higher food craving through cognitive impulsivity. The study concluded that psychological factors play an important mediating role between social media use and eating behaviour, and awareness about healthy social media consumption is important to prevent problematic eating patterns.

**Research Gap:** In the era of online sharing platform Youth shoulders the power of future, their behaviour affects the society and economy. It is observed from the available resources as research is done in various arenas except social media influence on food consumption habits among the youth in Thane region. Hence to justify it the research carried out at Thane region considering youth as driven force.

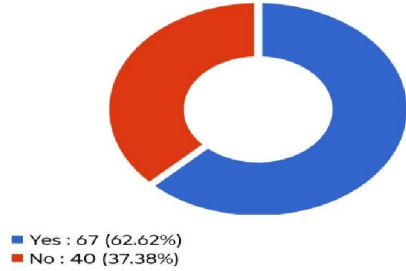
**3. Research Methodologies**

Type of Research	Descriptive Research
Research Universe	Youth
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling without replacement
Research Area	Thane Region
Sample Size	107
Method of Data Collection	Primary and Secondary
Primary data collection method	Collected data by google forms and personal interview
Secondary Data collection	Research Articles, Magazines, Newspaper, Websites, etc
Data Analysis	Descriptive Statistics Bar Graph, Line Graph, Charts



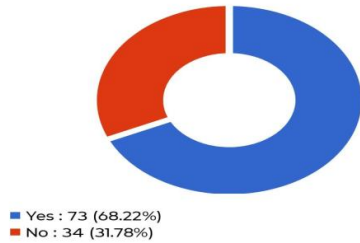
**4. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Visiting Restaurant After Seeing on Social Media



63% of respondents visited a food stall or restaurant after seeing it on social media. This shows influences of the social media on behaviour.

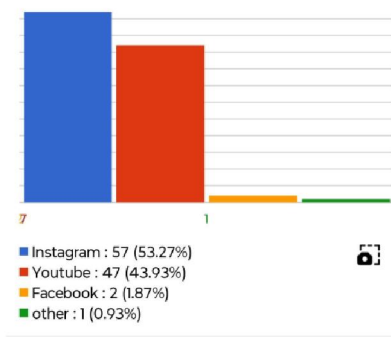
Social Media Influence on Food Habits



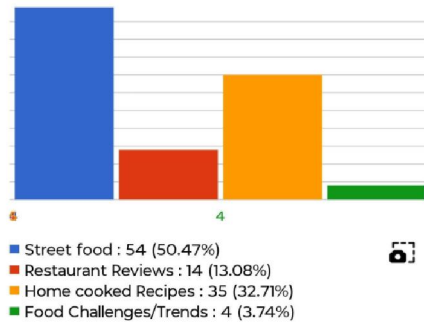
68% agreed that social media influences their eating habits and indicates strong digital marketing impact on youth food preferences.

Preferred Social Media Platforms

Instagram and YouTube are the most preferred platforms by the users for food-related contents.

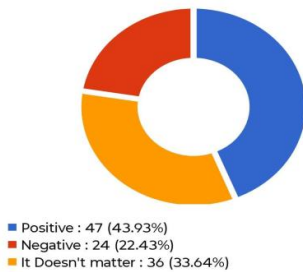


Type of Food Content Influencing Respondents



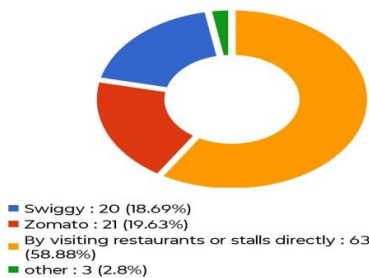
Street food content attracts 50% of respondents, followed by home-cooked recipes (33%) and food trends (17%).

Perceived Impact of Social Media



50% think social media's influence as positive, while only 16% view it as negative.

Restaurant vs Online Delivery Preference



60% prefer visiting restaurants directly over 40% use online delivery platforms.

**Hypothesis Testing:**

H<sub>1</sub>: Social Media marketing significantly influences food habits of adults.

Social Media	Yes(%)	No(%)
Visited food stall after seeing on social media	63	37
Social media influences food preference	68	32

Based on above data One-Sample Proportion Test (Z-test for proportion) applied.

Test 1: Visited food stall after seeing on social media

Yes = 63

No = 37

Proportion test

Sample proportion

$\hat{p} = 63/100 = 0.63$



Population proportion under  $H_0$

$$p_0 = 0.50$$

Standard Error (SE)

$$SE = \sqrt{[p_0(1 - p_0) / n]}$$

$$= \sqrt{[0.5 \times 0.5 / 100]}$$

$$= \sqrt{0.0025}$$

$$= 0.05$$

Z value

$$Z = (\hat{p} - p_0) / SE$$

$$= (0.63 - 0.50) / 0.05$$

$$= 0.13 / 0.05$$

$$= \mathbf{2.60}$$

Critical Z (5% level, one-tailed) = **1.645**

Since **2.60 > 1.645**,

➔ Reject  $H_0$

**Conclusion:** Social media significantly influences visiting food stalls.

Test 2: Social media influences food preference

Yes = 68

No = 32

$$\hat{p} = 0.68$$

$$Z = (0.68 - 0.50) / 0.05$$

$$= 0.18 / 0.05$$

$$= \mathbf{3.60}$$

Since **3.60 > 1.645**,

➔ Reject  $H_0$

**Conclusion:** Social media significantly influences food preferences.

At the 5% level of significance, the calculated Z values (2.60 and 3.60) are greater than the critical value (1.645).

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that social media marketing has a significant influence on the food habits and preferences of adults. Hence, the ( $H_1$ ) Social Media marketing significantly influences food habits of adults is accepted.

#### Findings:

1. Social media influences youth eating habits.
2. Majority of respondents have visited restaurants after seeing online promotions.
3. Instagram and YouTube are most preferred for food marketing platforms.
4. Street food content has maximum reach.
5. Almost respondents think content shown on social platform

#### Limitations:

The collected sample size of the study is limited to 107 respondents.

The most respondents are teenage, it shows study is focused on limited age range.

The study relies on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by personal bias or inaccurate reports.

The findings may not be true for the other regions due to limited geographical coverage.



### 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the necessity of awareness about the food choices made by youth by getting influenced by the social media marketing. The influencers show trendy and attractive food items for promotion but doesn't show the dark reality, the reality which needs to be considered like unhealthy and unhygienic food. There are low no. of influencers promoting truth over glamour and trendy content like Food Pharmer, Fit Tuber, and Satvic Movement etc. The youth may feel Fear of Missing Out(FOMO) if not posted photos with trendy foods. The most respondents showed the strong influence by the social media exposure on their food choices by showing behavior's like visiting the restaurant after viewing on social media , Street food and Restaurant reviews have maximum interest of viewers.

### Recommendations:

Respondents are advised to avoid blindly trusting advertisements or influencers without critically evaluating the content.

Respondents may encounter risks, as excessive posting of stories can reveal detailed information about their daily activities.

### Scope of Future Research:

Future research can be conducted with a larger sample size to enhance the generalizability and reliability of the findings.

Research may include a broader age range to examine differences in food buying behaviour across various age groups. The study can incorporate mixed methods or observational data to minimize self-report bias and improve data accuracy. Additional studies may be carried out across different geographical regions to compare results and increase external validity.

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