

Food Influencers in Egypt: The Emergence of Digital Trendsetters and the Cultural Glorification of Food

Kunmun Sahu Behera

School of Business, Coventry University Branch, The Knowledge Hub Universities, Cairo, Egypt
kunmun@tkh.edu.eg

Abstract: *This exploratory study examines the role of food influencers in Egypt, focusing on their impact on audience perceptions and consumption habits. Drawing upon recent literature and theoretical models such as the Source Credibility Theory, the study identifies how food influencers shape consumer behavior and digital marketing trends. The research also highlights the phenomenon of food glorification, where influencers elevate food beyond mere sustenance, contributing to changing societal attitudes toward dining culture. The findings provide a foundation for future research into the ethical and commercial implications of influencer-driven food content.*

Keywords: Food influencers, social media marketing, Digital food culture, influencer branding, consumer behavior.

1. Introduction

Social media has provided infinite opportunities for normal users of these platforms to become opinion leaders for others, as such they are called social media influencers. Social media influencers are well known for having started as informed bloggers and social networkers [1]. They build for themselves an aura of authority in certain areas thus attracting people to follow them; some of their followers become fans. Influencers cover every topic under the sun. Social media has redefined the way food is presented and perceived. Food-related content spans multiple dimensions, from aesthetics and taste to preparation techniques and restaurant reviews. This is coupled with the rise of the so-called food influencers, individuals who review food in all forms and share their opinion with the world.

This study aims to explore the role of food influencers in Egypt, examining their impact on audience perceptions, digital marketing trends, and the broader implications of glorifying food on social media. The paper will start by outlining the context of the research which is Egypt. This will be followed by an overview of the methodology, theoretical framework and recent literature. The paper will move onto highlighting the wide variety of food-based content. Then it will focus on the key Egyptian food influencers and the main observations related to them, as well as the role they play in digital marketing. The paper will outline the impact of these influencers especially in glorifying food. Lastly, potential future directions for research will be provided to help researchers who want to explore further the area of social media food influencers.

2. Focus on Egypt

This paper focuses on food influencers in Egypt, a developing country situated in North Africa, boasting a large population of more than a hundred million inhabitants [2]. Like the rest of the world a main activity and

pastime of people is preparing food and/or eating. Egyptian cuisine—based broadly on the Mediterranean cuisine—is very diverse given the diverse geographical regions in Egypt. While there are some common foods, variations exist in how food is prepared and cooked in twenty-seven governorates. Some governorates are quite cosmopolitan such as Cairo and Alexandria while others are more rural with traditional cooking. The number of dining establishments has surged in recent years. The coffee culture is also growing, with coffee shops and cafes popping all over the cities creating a lifestyle change for Egyptians and becoming an important destination and pastime for many. The key research question is: what is the influence of food influencers on their audiences, followers and fans?

Understanding the influence of food influencers is critical for brands, policymakers, and researchers interested in digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior. The study sheds light on the ethical considerations of food glorification and its implications for public health and social media dynamics.

3. Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory approach, analyzing existing literature and social media trends to map the landscape of food influencers in Egypt. Data was collected through content analysis of leading Egyptian food influencers, focusing on engagement patterns, branding strategies, and audience interaction.

4. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

4.1 Theoretical Framework

To support the research question which focuses on the influence that food influencers have over their audiences, followers and fans, the paper will consider two theoretical concepts which it can draw upon to explain the influence better. The theoretical framework includes the Source Credibility Theory and Displays of Authenticity. Source credibility refers to the positive traits of communicators that influence audience acceptance of their message. This theory

stresses the importance of three traits: expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. It is important for audiences to perceive the source to be credible in order for the source to retain their audience. This is especially critical for influencers who aim to attract, retain and grow audiences, given that an increase in audience numbers translates into an increase in monetization and growing income for influencers. Displays of authenticity, i.e. coming across as real, true to yourself and credible is a key tactic employed by influencers to thrive and to continue to capture their audience's attention. Internet based fame usually depends on the authenticity of a star's self-representation and on the concepts of intimacy, and it is experienced through the possibility of interaction rather than through simple familiarity [3].

4.2 Literature Review

The literature on food influencers is recent given that it started with the proliferation of influencers on social media. This was preceded by 'food blogging', which started in 1997 and still exists alongside other types of food-related content online. In a review of the recent literature covering this topic conducted in Egypt, it was noticeable that no one specific discipline 'owns' the body of research about food influencers. There are studies conducted under the umbrella of Business Schools, Communication Schools, Tourism and Hotel Management Schools, Engineering Schools and even Medical Schools amongst others [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14].

Different disciplines come at the topic from different angles, but all aim to look at the so-called 'influence' of these influencers. The second observation is that different studies refer differently to individuals who generate food-related content. Egyptian studies have referred to these individuals as food bloggers, food critics, nutrition Instagrammers, and social media influencers. These different descriptions are not synonymous and while there are similarities, they do not refer to the exact same thing. In general, the body of research about food influencers is recent.

Most studies reviewed found that food influencers had a direct influence on their audiences. For example, in a study conducted by a team from the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, it was found that the effect of food quality on customers' experience in the presence of food critics' reviews is higher than the direct effect of food quality on customers' experience, which means that food critics' reviews help increase the effect of food quality on customers' experience. Another study, conducted by a team from the Faculty of Medicine looked at the association between digital food marketing and its relationship with obesity. The study found that students with intense social networks use showed higher levels of exposure to and engagement with social networks food marketing. Daily exposure and high engagement were not independent predictors of being overweight or obesity. Another study from the Faculty of Commerce focused on the impact of sponsorship disclosure by social media influencers on brand love in the fast-food chain restaurants and found that sponsorship disclosure affects brand attitude and brand love significantly in the fast-food industry in Egypt. Another

study by a Management School Team looked at the role of the gratifications of nutrition Instagrammers' generated content in developing actual buying behaviour for functional foods in Egypt. Results indicate that attitudes toward these influencers and functional foods significantly impact consumers' purchase intention.

4.3 Food Bloggers or Food Influencers?

One question to consider following the literature review is are they food bloggers or food influencers? Does it matter? Influencers can be defined from at least four viewpoints. The first viewpoint focuses on the role influencers typically play in marketing, brand endorsement of a certain brand, product or service which ultimately influences the purchasing decision from this brand [15] [16] [17]. The second viewpoint focuses on specific named influencers and their communities documenting their phenomenal success in creating their online personas [18] [19] [20]. The third viewpoint in studies examines the relationship between influencers and their audiences [21]. The fourth viewpoint of studies revolves around specific genres of content produced by influencers [22] [23] [24].

In the literature reviewed, food influencers are typically referred to by researchers and scholars as food bloggers or reviewers. The paradox of this naming is that researchers and scholars don't view food influencers as 'influencers'. Typically, in research, when the word 'influencers' is used it is related more to lifestyle influencers. When it comes to food, most influencers in that realm are described as bloggers. Even the influencers see themselves as bloggers. Does this matter in any way? It does matter because when food influencers are referred to as bloggers, it makes them seem as if they are on a different level in the playing field; second class citizens on social media, though many of them garner millions of followers and fans and through that they make millions themselves.

5. Food Influencers in Egypt

5.1 The Rise of Food Influencers as Trendsetters in the Food Arena

Food influencers in Egypt are increasing in numbers and types of content they generate daily. The food industry has become a lucrative space for influencers, driving reviews, discussions, and monetization on social media. The content they cover under the food umbrella varies widely. After months of observation and consuming of content, it is evident that there are different forms of content food influencers generate. These categories include the following:

Reviewing a specific category of food: In this category, food influencers review one type of food with its variations. For example, reviewing some of the crisps or noodles in the market or viral products such as Dubai chocolate or croissants baked by different places. They compare different brands to one another.

Reviewing dining and drinking places: In this category, food influencers review meals and drinks offered at different restaurants and cafes. In general, most reviews are

positive which reflects the nature of 'sponsored content'. If there are negative comments, they are usually few and quite superficial. They review restaurants/cafes whether specific cuisines or locations such as Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, etc.

Reaction videos: In this category, the food influencers react to another video also about food and the audience gets to see their reaction to that video.

Cooking and food preparation: This is a large category, led by chefs and faux chefs. The Egyptian cuisine which has a Mediterranean twist is featured heavily. In this category, there are traditional meals as well as those with a more modern spin to them. Another area is preparing and cooking meals and commenting on someone else's cooking.

Food travel dairies: In this category, food influencers travel around Egypt and taste and review dishes from each part emphasising the regional differences.

Reviewing supermarkets: In this category, food influencers review the different supermarkets in Egypt looking at product variety as well as price and the whole shopping experience.

Reviewing food preparation and cooking appliances and tools: In this category, food influencers review the different appliances and tools for food preparation and cooking. In Egypt, this category covers 'Rafaei' which also translates literally to (thin things), and this means the small tools that are used in the kitchen such as peelers, funnels and mixing spoons.

Cooking challenges and food related trends: In this category, food influencers follow different trends on social media and execute them within the Egyptian context and culture.

Responding to requests by fans: In this category, food influencers are asked to review certain restaurants or food categories. They usually give these videos titles like 'What fans request'.

From this overview, it is evident that there are several types of content generated by food influencers. The content varies heavily and covers a wide range of formats.

5.2 The Top Food Influencers in Egypt

The top players in Egypt are growing daily and almost equally distributed between male and female influencers as well as the growing number of influencers who are couples.

In the male food influencer category are:

Amr El Hady: Identifying himself as a Tik Tok food creator. He boasts around 4 million followers across different social media platforms in February 2025. His content revolves around trying out meals at restaurants and cafes and giving reviews. He started with a focus on Egypt and has now expanded his reviews to other countries such as the Gulf countries and European countries. Amr is also a dentist.

Abaza: With around 2 million followers across different social media platforms in February 2025, he creates content that revolves around trying out restaurants and cafes and giving reviews. His focus is on trying food places in different parts of Egypt as well as different food products.

Mon3esh: Another dentist with around 5 million followers across different social media platforms in February 2025. His introduction is 'I like to try things'; however, his focus is on food mainly whether reviewing restaurants or preparing food himself.

The list goes on with male food influencers Mohamed Ahmed, Mahmoud Zizo, Alii saied, Mohamed Cheetus, Ramy soli, Ahmed Sa3d, Tokhy, Day with Well, Karim Afat, Mahmoud Swilem, Food hunter Egypt, Amr Ragae, Essamyat, Ramy ElDarawy, Aly Hegazy, Shoukry's food and Food cast.

In the list for female food influencers:

Chefista: Hoda Rashad boasts around one million followers across different social media platforms in February 2025. Her content revolves around trying and reviewing different restaurants.

Dina ElKafrawy: Dina describes herself on Instagram to be a 'food explorer'. She started originally reviewing supermarkets and then branched out into other areas of food-related content. She has a following of around one million followers across different social media platforms in February 2025. She not only reviews food places but also cooks herself. She also has several food travel diaries.

The list goes on with female food influencers Banoura Eats, Jessy Tastes, Eat wiz Esraa, Yomnaz Into Food, Thro Nadasfoodie, Basma Mahmoud, Esraa Esam and Bassant Atef.

In the category of couples there are:

- *Double Foodies:* Youssef and Yasmin are a couple and are students who share their passion about reviewing food.
- *Cairo Foodie Couple:* Armenian Cairo based couple, give food reviews especially during travelling.
- *Cairo Couple Craves:* The couple Mirna and Mohamed describe themselves as content creators and describe what they generate as food reviews. In addition to other couples of food influencers.

All the above-mentioned food influencers employ the Source Credibility Theory in their presentation of content. This includes showing expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness.

6. Impact of Food Influencers

6.1 It is good...It is great...Can that even be possible?

Across these different categories, food influencers use facial expressions and sounds to express emotions and reactions to tastes, usually in a positive manner. Storytelling is occasionally used by these influencers. Any consumer of food influencers' content will notice that most reviews, if

not all of them, range from it's good to it's great. Rarely do they give negative reviews. This can be explained by the fact that most of the reviews are a form of 'paid advertising' but in a sense it also defies the purpose of the review. Viewers do not get an authentic let alone useful opinion. The content tells the audience about the existence of the meal/product/restaurant.

Food influencers scout the market and tell audiences what is out there; a proper evaluation does not take place. However, it doesn't really provide a proper review with ratings, positive opinions or negative opinions. In this case, there are little or no Displays of Authenticity. Nevertheless, the audience for these influencers is increasing by the second. The motivation for following these influencers despite lack of Displays of Authenticity is one of the areas worth exploring in the future.

6.2 Glorifying Food

Despite hunger being identified as the second goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, whereby the aim is to create a world free of hunger by 2030 [25], social media is fuelling the phenomenon of glorifying food. A factor contributing to glorifying food is food influencers and the content they generate. They make food go beyond something that satisfies a basic and primary need for something that has a much bigger role and space in our lives. Food influencers show food in an artistic and visually appealing way so that it becomes something humans glorify and celebrate; this surpasses the need to satisfy hunger. Given that most of the reviews are positive as mentioned above, the more the glorification happens.

This effect sidelines the issue of hunger which is prevalent in some parts of the world. The fact that a 30 second video can show a dish in a very appealing manner contrasts sharply with the needs of the millions who do not have access to basic food. According to the United Nations World Food Programme, 783 million people around the world will go to bed on an empty stomach [26]. Some may argue that different humanitarian organisations use social media to appeal to people to donate; therefore, there is no issue in promoting food on social media since it is being used at the same time to advocate for donations to end hunger globally.

6.3 Are Food Influencers the Best Tool for Digital Marketing?

Judging by the size of the influencer advertising market in Egypt, food influencer marketing is here to stay and is projected to increase in size and expand in the future.

According to Statista, the Influencer Advertising market in Egypt is projected to reach US\$42.22m in 2025. The market is expected to grow annually at a rate of 9.35% between 2025 and 2029, leading to a market volume of US\$60.36m by 2029. The average ad spending per internet user in the Influencer Advertising market in Egypt is estimated to be US\$0.40 in 2025 [27].

In Egypt, Influencer Advertising is rapidly growing, with a focus on authenticity and cultural relevance to engage the

local audience effectively. Reliable information related to spending on food influencer advertising is not available. However, the sheer spending on influencer marketing in Egypt demonstrates how successful this form of digital marketing is for advertisers, and it is projected to grow further.

7. Future Areas for Research

While some studies have covered the impact of food influencers, much research is needed in this area; there are many future research possibilities. One potential area is examining the role of influencers in reviving interest in traditional Egyptian dishes. Another area which can be explored is the analysis of the effectiveness of collaborations between food influencers and local restaurants or brands. Studying the motivations of audiences to follow food influencers despite the lack of Displays of Authenticity is one more area which could be explored. This area could also benefit from longitudinal studies on influencer marketing effectiveness. It is recommended that studies look at the fastest growing social media platforms such as TikTok [27]. Food influencers in Egypt is indeed a rich area to be explored and researched.

8. Conclusion

This study highlights the growing prominence of food influencers in Egypt, demonstrating their influence on consumer behavior and digital marketing strategies. The findings underscore the broader implications of food glorification, raising ethical considerations regarding social media's role in shaping dietary habits. Future research should further explore the interplay between influencer credibility, audience perception and marketing effectiveness in the evolving digital food space.

References

- [1] Friedrichsen, M. and Mühl-Benninghaus, W. (eds.), Handbook of Social Media Management: Value Chain and Business Models in Changing Media Markets, US: Springer, 2013.
- [2] 'Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics', [Online]. <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/>, 2025.
- [3] Ellcessor, E. Tweeting @feliciaday: Online Social Media, Convergence, and Subcultural Stardom, Cinema Journal, vol. 51, no. 2, 2012, p. 46–66.
- [4] Abd El Moaty, A. et al. Assessing the Impact of Food Bloggers on Egyptian Consumer Attitudes towards Restaurant Selection, The Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Alexandria University, vol. 21, no. 2, 2024, p. 27-46.
- [5] Eissa, M. et al. The Role of the Gratifications of Nutrition, Journal of Electrical Systems, vol. 20, no. 4, 2024, p. 1469-1489.
- [6] Elsaed, AA. et al. The Impact of Food Quality on Customers Experience in Egyptian Restaurants: The Mediating Effect of Food Critics, International Academic Journal Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, vol. 8, no. 1, 2022, p. 63-85.

- [7] Elshazly, A. et al. Understanding how narrative attributes of sponsored food vlog affect viewers' engagement: Evidence from Egypt, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 84, 2025, p. 104178.
- [8] Fathy, EA. et al. From plate to post: how foodstagramming enriches tourist satisfaction and creates memorable experiences in culinary tourism, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2024, p. 1–20.
- [9] Foda, AM. et al. Understanding the Influence of Food Value on Fast-Food Customer Behavior: A Study on the Mediating Role of Blogger Reviews and Moderating Effect of Content Credibility, *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2024, p. 9-19.
- [10] Hefny, LI. Shaping destination marketing through travel blogs, *The Scientific Journal for the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Alexandria*, vol 13 (13-A), 2016, p. 184-202.
- [11] Magdy A. and Hassan, H. Foodstagramming unleashed: Examining the role of social media involvement in enhancing the creative food tourism experience, *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 2025.
- [12] Sadek, Z. et al. Digital Food Marketing on Social Networking Sites: Exposure, Engagement, and association with Overweight/Obesity among Medical Students in An Egyptian University., *The Egyptian Journal of Community Medicine*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2024, p. 90-97.
- [13] Waleed, N. and Azzam, R. The Impact of Egyptian Food Bloggers toward Consumer's, *MIU*, 2020, p. 1-31.
- [14] Yousef, C. The Impact of Sponsorship Disclosure by Social Media Influencers on Brand Love in the fast-food chain restaurants in Egypt, *The Scientific Journal for Commercial and Environmental Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2024, p. 55-102.
- [15] Chapple, C. and Cownie, F. An Investigation into Viewers' Trust in and Response Towards Disclosed Paid-for-Endorsements by YouTube Lifestyle Vloggers, *Journal of Promotional*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2017, p. 110–136.
- [16] Colliander J. and Dahlén, M. Following the Fashionable Friend: The Power of Social Media, *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2011, p. 313–320.
- [17] Lee, J. and Watkins, B. YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions and intentions, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 69, no. 12, 2016, p. 5753–5760.
- [18] Berryman, R. and Kavka, M. 'I Guess A Lot of People See Me as a Big Sister or a Friend': the role of intimacy in the celebrification of beauty vloggers, *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2017, p. 307-320.
- [19] García-Rapp, F. The digital media phenomenon of YouTube beauty gurus: the case of Bubzbeauty, *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2016, p. 360-375.
- [20] Jerslev, A. In the time of the microcelebrity: Celebrification and the YouTube Zoella, *International Journal of Communication*, 2016, p. 5233–5251.
- [21] Aran-Ramspott, S. et al. Youtubers' social functions and their influence on pre-adolescence, *Comunicar*, vol. 57, no. XXV, 2018, p. 71–79.
- [22] Abidin, C and Ots, M. 'The Influencer's dilemma: The shaping', *AEJMC 2015, Annual Conference*, for the panel: "Media Branding Revised: Participative Audiences and Their Consequences for Media Branding, 2015, p. 1-12.
- [23] Ayish, M and Alnajjar, A. Arab Millennials' Articulation of Identity in Cyberspace: A study of three MENA YouTubers, *Arab Media and Society*, vol. Winter/Spr (27), 2019, p. 26-10.
- [24] Raun, T. Capitalizing intimacy: New subcultural forms of micro-celebrity strategies and affective labour on YouTube, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2018, p. 99–113.
- [25] 'Sustainable Development Goals', [Online]. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>, 2025.
- [26] 'Saving Lives Changing Lives', [Online]. <https://www.wfp.org/ending-hunger>, 2025.
- [27] Statista, 'Influencer Advertising, Egypt', [Online]. [https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/advertising/influencer-advertising/egypt#:~:text=The%20Influencer%20Advertising%20market%20in,US\\$2460.36m%20by%202029.,](https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/advertising/influencer-advertising/egypt#:~:text=The%20Influencer%20Advertising%20market%20in,US$2460.36m%20by%202029.,) 2025.