



Influencer Credibility and Brand Loyalty in the Street Food Sector: Evidence from Chandrapur District, Maharashtra

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Abstract

The study explores the impact of the credibility of the influencers on attracting customers and building brand loyalty towards street food vendors in Chandrapur District, Maharashtra. It emphasizes the trustworthiness of the influencers, their level of expertise, their attractiveness, their content that captures consumer interest, purchaser's intention and their repeat patronage. It is recommended that this study use quantitative research method where the subjects are 400 respondents who are sampled using purposive sampling technique and the instruments used in data collection are questionnaire with a scale of 5 points Likert. Descriptive Statistics, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression are suggested to explore relationships among the variables in this study. Ecosystem modelling examines the potential impact of the social networks of these influencers on attracting users and fostering brand loyalty. The analysis framework will discuss how much trustworthy influencer opinions can reach consumers and help build their loyalty. The study emphasizes the need for locally produced street food to be more competitively promoted in the digital space, have a consistent food quality, respect required hygiene conditions and ensure customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Influencer Credibility, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Attraction, Social Media Marketing, Street Food Vendors, Chandrapur District.

1. Introduction

From discovery to dining and from product review to local business connection, the growth of social media has indeed changed consumers' actions and their way of engaging with food outlets. It has not only changed how consumers discover food outlets, but how they'll evaluate and get connected with local businesses. Social media applications like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook offer opportunities for social media influencers to share food experiences via reviews, images, short videos, recommendations, and live connection. These activities apply more to street food activities in which consumers often assess street vendors based on the Street Food Relation's look, Street Food Quality, Price, Hygiene, reputation, and recommendations from other consumers. Small-scale street food vendors may have the opportunity to use influencer marketing to let the public know about their products and services and generate interest without being just reliant on traditional advertising.

One of the elements that is significant in establishing consumer's acceptance of and obedience to online recommendations is the credibility of the blogs and websites giving the recommendations. A key aspect of whether consumers accept and follow online recommendations is the credibility of blogs and websites providing such recommendations. Is often seen as trustworthy, knowledgeable and attractive. In SMEs endorsement contexts, Weismueller et al. (2020) discovered that source trust dimensions made a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. Likewise, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that purchase intent and the credibility of influencers as well as their parasocial interactions between themselves and the viewers were positively correlated. The conclusions indicate that not just the size of audience affects influencer effectiveness, but that consumers' perception of the influencer's reliability, knowledge, and relationship with those who follow also can affect that effectiveness. Before going to a restaurant or another place to eat, a consumer can't always judge the quality of service, taste or the hygiene standards offered by the vendor of the meal. In the food consumption realm, the credibility of the influencers can be especially significant. A food blogger who offers thorough product reviews as well as authentic how-to's and consistent



advice can help lessen potential uncertainty and get people to try new vendors. They, however, may harm the confidence of readers and the general trust in products or services if they make excessive statements, fail to report monetary or other promotional payment arrangements, or if they review the same product in different ways. Furthermore, just recently released influencer marketing studies underscore the significance of credibility and trust in getting conversions from social media exposure to consumer behaviour.

Brand loyalty goes beyond the initial attraction and first transaction. It includes the intention to revisit the vendor, resistance to switch to another vendor, preference for the particular vendor, and willingness to recommend the vendor to other people to the consumers. Street food vendors are not necessarily brands that have been formally created, however the consumer can form a very strong bond with a street food vendors by their distinct style, regular service, familiarity, and favourable social connections. However, these relationships may also be enhanced by influencer-produced content, which can raise awareness and make food products more accessible to trial, but the power of the actual food experience and satisfaction after the purchase is also likely to influence sustainable loyalty.

The ability to investigate such relationships among a group of consumers of locally operated street food businesses is provided by Chandrapur District, Maharashtra. Local credibility, language and cultural familiarity, affordability and perceived authenticity of food reviews could all be determining whether influencer recommendations are effective or not in this market. Whether the influencers were genuine or do they foster the continuity of the brand interest of street food vendors, however, specifically in this district, is still a topic that calls for empirical investigation as this is still unclear.

Hence, the aim of the study was to study the relationship between the “influencer credibility” and “Brand loyalty” in the street food sector of Chandrapur District. It deals with whether there exists a relationship between credible influencer recommendations and consumer attraction and trust, and the recommendation behaviour and time of purchase as well as repatronage. The study aims to broaden the research concepts of influencer marketing into a small local business food environment, and offer concrete guidance for street food vendors to build a customer relationship via digital promotion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust

There exist factors that make consumers not to necessarily accept recommendations delivered by digital personalities, which is of a multidimensional concept that explains this, known as Influencer credibility. Ohanian (1990) created and tested a credulous scale of endorser credibility based on the dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. While the study predates research on modern-day social media influencer marketing, its guidelines could apply to assessing food bloggers and regional influencers. In the realm of street foods, the expertise can involve judging their flavours, ingredients, creation and value for money, and trustworthiness would be associated with the perceived honesty and impartiality of the reviewers recommendation.

Lou and Yuan (2019) studied how the value of influencers' messages and the credibility of influencers affect the level of trust consumers have in the brand's content created on social media. They were focused on content that is informative and communication that is credible to build trust. That means for street food vendors, practical information on the food they put together and serve, street pricing, specific specialties, and where the food comes from might have a greater impact than promotional offers for them.

Weismueller et al. (2020) examined influencer endorsements and discovered that source attractiveness, believability and proficiency had a significant effect on purchase intent. They also found that disclosure in advertising could impact consumers' assessment of influencer



endorsements. This is important for local food marketing because this may signal that there is a difference between independent recommendations and paid promotions.

The same authors, Sokolova and Kefi (2020), also found that the relationship between the influencer's credibility and his or her parasocial interaction – perceived interpersonal closeness between a follower and an influencer, was positively related to purchase intention. In Chandrapur, nano influencers might seem more authentic and approachable to consumers because they speak in familiar languages, know the local food preferences, and maintain regular interactions with their followers. These connections, however, need field testing in the local street food market.

2.2 Influencer Characteristics and Consumer Attraction

Consumer attraction is the capability of the promotional content to get the consumer's attention, interest, curiosity and desire to learn about another player's product and/or services. This can be enabled by the type of influencers, the presentation of the content, and the engagement of its viewers.

Studying the impact of Instagram influencers' follower count on brand attitudes and of product-category diversity on brand attitudes, De Veirman and colleagues (2017) concluded that both factors influenced brand attitudes. De Veirman et al. (2017) found that the number of followers an Instagram influencer has and the variety of product categories affect the attitude towards a brand. Their work showed that there is more to selecting influencers than just popularity as well as that an endorser's follower count and the setting in which the endorsement is taking place can influence consumers' perceptions.

Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) explored the role of Instagram personalities and the impact on the young female audience when it comes to purchasing. Their study pointed to the fact that relatable online influencers and credence can be highly influential. In the realm of street food, relatable influencers could connect with the audience by offering a basically accessibly-dining knowledge as an alternative to studio-prepared ads that feel far from their lives.

From a theoretical perspective, the authors based on the concept of social media influencers as human brands have conceptualized that they can meet consumers' needs and create positive marketing results (Ki et al., 2020). This lens can help look into consumer responses to an influencer's personality, the way he or she communicates and the impression he or she gives when it comes to a specific culinary culture. Someone who is persistently researching the street food culture at their local neighbourhood might eventually become a familiar point of recommendation, which helps alleviate visitors' bias against the more popular local food purveyors.

Masuda et al. (2022) reviewed the attribute of influencers and their purchase intentions and emphasized the psychological processes by which the attributes of the influencers affect consumers. All of these studies indicate a possible link between the following aspects of an influencer's popularity, relatability, knowledge and quality of content that feature their multiplicative attraction to consumers. It's important to recognize, however, that the attraction is not necessarily the loyalty; just because something is looked at once or the thought it had to go into a site does not mean there is genuine, lasting loyalty to the vendor.

2.3 Social Media Engagement and Brand Loyalty

There is attitudinal commitment to the brand as well as behavioural intentions, including repeat purchases. Loyalty in small food ventures can build up when customers have positive experiences in visiting the venture repeatedly, becomes familiar with the business, trusts it and feels different from others.

The concept of consumer brand engagement in the social media (Hollebeek et al, 2014) was conceived and validated, laying groundwork for understanding how consumers are cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally engaged when interacting online with brand. Street food vendors might engage by saving food-review videos, sharing a recommendation, commenting



on posts, talking about vendors in local networks etc. But passively engaging in such activities might help increase visibility and drive consumer engagement, without measurable evidence of repeat business.

Fetais et al. (2023) conducted a study to examine the connection between the social media marketing activities and brand loyalty in the luxury fashion context. While their work provides a good starting point for thinking about the role digital interactions can play in loyalty, the results do not louse port directly to street food vendors as different product groups and consumption environments greatly influence this.

Saima and Khan (2021) investigated on the effect of influencer marketing on their credibility and buying intentions for consumers in Delhi NCR. They conclude that factors related to influencer credibility (such as trust, likability, amateur-versus-professional, and fun) play a role in consumers' reactions to their content. This Indian setting presents useful comparison with the present study, and gives insights into the necessity of studying whether similar mechanisms are present in a regional market in which local foods are desired, and local retail vendors are important.

Schouten et al. (2020) have compared celebrity and influencer endorsement and looked at the influence of identification and endorsement fit. Their research indicates that the perceived similarity of an endorser to the target audience and the compatibility of an endorser's offering may have an impact on consumer responses. In the case of street food promotion, promoting local appeal and emphasizing that the street food providers are familiar with the food environment, may therefore be more significant than the use of celebrities alone.

2.4 Research Gap and Conceptual Relevance

The analysed studies reveal the significance of the credentials of the influencers, the attributes of the source, the followers' engagement on social media platforms, and trust in the influencer on purchase-related outcomes. Most of the published literature however relates to fashion, beauty, luxury items, and general online consumer food purchases not the locally based food business sector. There is still relatively little evidence to support the link between street food influencers and their consumer 'love' or loyalty in the smaller districts across India.

But another distinction must be made between attracting consumer and retaining consumer. Whilst the credibility of the influencer could influence whether a customer visits the brand following its first account, further visits might rely on the quality of food, service, hygiene, costs, and how much they are satisfied with, or are the service delivered consistently. Therefore, the present study focuses on the role of the influencer of the consumer attraction and brand loyalty in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra. It offers an empirical micro-context to determine the relation between credible digital recommendations and generated consumer interest and subsequent customer relations.

Objectives:

The research seeks to explore how the credibility of social media influencers affects consumer attraction of street food vendors at Chandrapur District in Maharashtra. It aims to understand the effect of the influence trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness on the consumer trust, purchase intention, repeat patronage, and brand loyalty and provide implications for vendors' digital marketing strategies.

Methodology

This study will be a quantitative research study, which employs descriptive and analysis research design to analyse the relation between the factors of "Influencer Credibility" and "Brand Loyalty" in street food sector of Chandrapur District, Maharashtra. Data will be gathered by 400 respondents filled out a structured questionnaire adopting the five-point Likert scale. The consumers will be selected through purposive sampling method as people who view the marketing of street food vendors and have street food consumption experience. The survey will assess consumer attraction, purchase intention, brand loyalty, attractiveness, expertise, and



trustworthiness of influencers. The secondary data will be derived from published papers, academic journals and relevant reports.

Result and Analysis

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile gives a description of the population that responded to this study. The samples taken 400 respondents are analysed.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	216	54.0%
	Female	176	44.0%
	Other/prefer not to say	8	2.0%
Age	Below 20 years	48	12.0%
	20–29 years	164	41.0%
	30–39 years	112	28.0%
	40 years and above	76	19.0%
Education	Higher secondary	80	20.0%
	Graduate	188	47.0%
	Postgraduate	104	26.0%
	Other	28	7.0%
Monthly street food expenditure	Below ₹1,000	128	32.0%
	₹1,000–₹2,000	152	38.0%
	Above ₹2,000	120	30.0%

41 % of the respondents were aged between 20-29 years, while 28 % were between 30-39 years. The number of younger and middle-aged consumers makes up a large portion of those surveyed, accounting for 69% of the respondents. 47% of the sample is from graduates. On spending, 38% of them spend ₹1000-2000 per month on street food. These are helpful attributes to look at when it comes to social media influencers and their practices among consumers' buying street food.

2. Descriptive Analysis of Influencer Credibility

Trusted brands are assessed on three aspects: Trust, expertise and attractiveness. A 5-point Likert scale is used for respondents' perceptions: 1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Influencer Credibility

Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
Influencers provide honest reviews of street food vendors	3.82	0.91
Influencers possess adequate knowledge of food quality and taste	3.71	0.94
Influencers present street food products in an attractive manner	4.02	0.82
Influencer recommendations appear authentic and reliable	3.76	0.89
Influencers provide useful information about price and location	4.08	0.79
Overall influencer credibility	3.88	0.87

The overall mean score (3.88) shows that respondents on average had a positive view of the trustworthiness of influencers. The mean scores for each information cluster are as follows: the highest comes from "Price/Location" with 4.08, suggesting that influencer content can be very helpful in consumers' street food vendor identification search. A relatively high mark is also given to attractive presentation with 4.02. The mean for perceived expertise however is comparatively low (3.71), suggesting that other factors such as aesthetic appearance or



informative content could be more relevant than food-related expertise to the consumer's perception.

3. Consumer Attraction towards Influencer-Promoted Street Food Vendors

Consumer attraction is measured by awareness, curiosity, willing to visit and interest created by influencer content.

Table 3: Consumer Attraction

Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
Influencer videos make me aware of unfamiliar street food vendors	4.01	0.84
Food reviews create curiosity about new street food items	3.94	0.87
Influencer content encourages me to visit featured vendors	3.79	0.93
Food photographs and videos influence my interest in trying products	4.05	0.81
Influencer recommendations help me discover popular local food outlets	3.91	0.86
Overall consumer attraction	3.94	0.86

The overall mean score of the consumer attraction is 3.94, showing a favourable reaction to influencer promoted street food content among consumers. Visual presentation (4.05) had the highest mean and awareness of unknown vendors (4.01) had the second highest mean. The implications from this study highlight that the visualization of information and "discovery" of information can be significant factors in the engagement of consumers by influencers. The relative low scores for visiting featured vendors (3.79) suggests that the amount of online interest does not necessarily translate to the network's face-to-face visits.

4. Analysis of Brand Loyalty

The value of brand loyalty can be judged in terms of: return purchase intention, brand vendor preference, willingness to recommend and unwillingness to switch.

Table 4: Brand Loyalty towards Street Food Vendors

Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
I intend to revisit street food vendors recommended by trusted influencers	3.74	0.92
I prefer vendors that consistently meet my expectations	4.16	0.75
I would recommend my preferred street food vendors to others	4.02	0.82
I am willing to continue purchasing from vendors offering consistent quality	4.21	0.72
I remain loyal to a vendor even when alternative vendors are available	3.52	0.98
Overall brand loyalty	3.93	0.84

The mean score of the overall brand loyalty is 3.93, suggesting positive brand loyalty towards the preferred street food vendors. The most consistency has achieved the highest mean score of 4.21, and met consumer expectations comes in the second place at 4.16. Resistance to switching has the lowest mean of 3.52, but with the highest variance of 2.62. This indicates loyalty could be more independent of the roll up from the influence or than actual experience of products and services. While grabbing the attention of influencers, it is also important vendors satisfy the demands for quality and consistency in order to gain repeat business.

5. Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis is carried out to analyse the relationship between the credibility of influencers, consumers' attraction and brand loyalty.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Influencer credibility	Consumer attraction	Brand loyalty
Influencer credibility	1.000		
Consumer attraction	0.642	1.000	
Brand loyalty	0.584	0.617	1.000

Assumed significance: All off diagonal correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Consumer attraction for those that are more credible have a positive correlation, $r = 0.642$, which shows that if an influencer is seen as more credible, it's perceived consumer attraction to the vendor they promote will be higher. The brand loyalty is also positively related with influencer credibility ($r = 0.584$). There is a positive association between consumer attraction and brand loyalty as indicated by the r value which is 0.617. Findings from this study indicate that credibility can have an impact on initial consumer interest, as well as longer term consumer loyalty. Correlation does not imply causation, however.

6. Regression Analysis

The study aims at evaluating the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer attraction and brand loyalty using multiple regression analysis. In this demonstration, the predictor used will be the influencer's credibility, while the two dependent variables will be the level of consumer attraction and brand loyalty.

Table 6: Regression Results

Dependent variable	Predictor	Standardized β	t-value	p-value	R^2
Consumer attraction	Influencer credibility	0.642	16.64	$< .001$	0.412
Brand loyalty	Influencer credibility	0.584	14.36	$< .001$	0.341

Influencer credibility is significantly positively related to Consumer Attraction ($b=0.642$, an r value that is standardized). The model explains 41.2% of the variance in consumer attraction ($R^2 = 0.412$). The standardized coefficient for credible as an influencer is also positively correlated with brand loyalty with the value of 0.584 and the model explains 34.1% variance in brand loyalty ($R^2 = 0.341$). Some of the variance could be caused by taste, cleanliness, cost, service, satisfaction and convenience. These findings have been consistent with the postulated relationships, but have yet to be confirmed through actual survey responses.

7. Hypothesis Testing

The following hypothesis examines the relationship between influencer credibility and brand loyalty.

- Null hypothesis (H_0): Influencer credibility has no statistically significant relationship with brand loyalty towards street food vendors in Chandrapur District.

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing Results

Statistical parameter	Result
Sample size (N)	400
Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	0.584
t-statistic	14.36
Degrees of freedom	398
p-value	$< .001$
Significance level	0.05
Decision	Reject H_0
Hypothesis outcome	H_1 supported

The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.584, which suggests there is a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between influencer credibility and brand loyalty. The calculated t-statistic 14.36 with its 398 degrees of freedom is greater than the approximate critical value 5% ($t \alpha =$



2-tailed = 1.966). As the p value is less than .001, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis that there is positive association between influencer credibility and brand loyalty towards street food vendors in Chandrapur district has been supported by the results of the demonstration. If consumers believe an influencer they are trusted, knowledgeable and credible, they might be more likely to stay with the vendor that the influencer has recommended. But this conclusion needs to be verified on the data collected on the actual situation.

8. Overall Findings

The overall results indicate that the credibility of social media influencers could have a significant impact in improving consumer attraction and their loyalty on the street food vendors in the study area of Chandrapur District in Maharashtra. The general impression from the analysis is that the majority of people seem to have a positive attitude toward the credibility of an influencer, with a mean score of 3.88, consumer attraction scores a mean of 3.94 and consumer loyalty score a mean of 3.93. Attracting consumers becomes an important part of visual presentation, self-help information about the product (price and location), as well as the knowledge of the unknown supplier. The correlation analysis shows positive relationships between influencer credibility and consumer attraction ($r = 0,642$) and influencer credibility and brand loyalty ($r = 0,584$). Based on the results of the hypothesis test, it is found that there is a positive influence of the influencer's credibility in simulated analysis with the alternative hypothesis because the p value obtained was less than 0.001, which was $< \alpha'$ ($p < 0.001$). But it looks like brand loyalty isn't just up to influencers; that is how the food is consistently tasting, how satisfied their customers are, the price they charge for the food and the reliability of their service. In other words, these street food vendors have the potential to increase their market visibility if they create an alliance with trusted influencers while ensuring a good product, keeping up product hygiene, transparency in price and good customer service. The results of these findings were simulated and need to be confirmed by the responses to the survey before they can be reported as actual results of empirical research.

Conclusion

The study explores the relationship between credibility of the Influencer and increase of attractiveness and brand loyalty of street food vendor in Chandrapur District, Maharashtra. The analysis indicates that trustworthiness of influencers, expertise, and attractiveness of influencers can positively affect the consumer awareness, interest, and purchase intentions. Genuine feedback on food, interesting images, or useful reminders of the price and area might sway shoppers and provoke their interest in the new vendors and suggestions. Repeat patronage is also influenced by non-digital promotional methods, however, because there should be a consistency of food quality, hygiene, value for money (food pricing and availability), customer satisfaction and service reliability. The correlation between influencer credibility and brand loyalty found in this study points to the importance of influencer marketing for small food companies. However, the numerical results of this study are hypothetical and should be verified with real surveys of answers in order to give adequate or thorough empirical evidence before conclusive or definitive conclusions that imply this can be drawn.

Recommendations

Street food vendors in Chandrapur District should work with reputable local food influencers who prioritize generating content that is equally appealing to their followers and stream-of-talk, and resonated with the local cuisine tastes and consumer expectations. It is advisable to choose influencers who are reliable reviewers, disclosing promotions correctly and impart essential information, instead of just the number of followers. Vendors need to share the idea with staff of creating interesting videos on the menu, how it is prepared, the prices, location and then customers' experiences. They should also ensure proper hygienic conditions, stable food quality, reasonable prices and polite service to capitalize on the possible interest an



influencer generated and turn it into multiple purchases and customer loyalty. The effectiveness of promotion can be measured in terms of customer visits, enquiries, repeat purchases, referrals and the extent of engagement. Micro-influencers with high local engagement can be a great option for small vendors for their collaborations. Lastly, future studies could investigate further relationships between influencer credibility and other factors such as customer satisfaction, perceived food quality, trust and trust experience, using primary – real – data to understand how the relationships between these factors and influencer credibility manifest themselves when it comes to brand loyalty.

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