

## STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DAILY FOOD CHOICES OF MILLENNIALS (AGE GROUP 15-25)

Sachin A Rayarikar\*

\*Asst. Professor, MSIHMCT, Model Colony, Shivaji Nagar, Pune

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the choices made by the young generation which is popularly known as Millennial Generation! This food choices made by this generation has direct impact on the sales of restaurants and cloud kitchens. It has been observed and is being discussed in various literature review that the choices of cuisines, style of preparations, styles of presentation and even the décor and seating arrangements keep changing over the period. These preferences are driven by the frequent patrons of the restaurants and by those who order online. To understand the changing demands of the customer we studied the influence of Social Media. Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication and community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Now Social Media these days for the Millennials is dominated by some well-known digital apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Zomato, Swiggy, Food Panda and of course following various Celebrities, Chef's blogs, Food Bloggers and Vloggers.

Today the Millennials are tech savvy, and they form their opinion based on all of the above Social Media networks and apps. This leads to selection of choices of cuisine and restaurant. The choices made by the Millennials are based on the prominent positioning of a particular product or restaurant. These selections start appearing in various interlinked apps as soon as they are logged in. So they influence more and more Millennials.

The study reveals reasons for selection and behavioral traits that are influenced by the social media.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Food Choices, Millennials, Influence of Social media, Consumer Psychology, Food bloggers, Social media platforms

### Introduction to the topic

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the age of Social media. Everything from the products purchased by consumers to the media is dictated by social media. It has become the most effective way of communication as well as marketing. Everyone right from young to the old is on social media. It has become a necessity rather than medium of recreation. Let us first understand what exactly is social media. Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication and community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Some popular examples of social media are WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Year by year, the usage of social media is significantly increasing. Instagram in particular has gained a lot of popularity. It is one of the fastest growing social networking platforms. Instagram is an American photo/video sharing social networking platform founded in 2010. Currently, there are over 2 billion people using Instagram worldwide and the number is expected to rise further. Over 50% of the social media users log in daily into Instagram making the social media platform number one in terms of generating consumer engagement. According to studies, the food preferences of people tend to get influenced by the type of content they watch more often on social media.



**FOOD**

**Rayarikar\***  
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**Selection of the topic**

The motive of this project is to study and analyze how social media plays a role in the changing of daily food choices and purchase intention of the millennial generation. This can be achieved by interacting with millennials and observing their social media usage as well as the content they happen to watch more likely. This will help to study the social media algorithms which will help to understand the changing food choices which are influenced by various social media platforms.

**Significance of the study**

In the age of technology, social media has become an integral part of the lives of people of all age groups. It is not only a medium of recreation but impacts almost every aspect of the daily lives of people right from fashion to lifestyle changes. This also includes the eating habits of people, especially the millennial generation. The millennial generation is very content oriented and gets influenced a lot by social media and the trends in society. The impacts of social media may be positive as well as negative depending upon the individual. This research will help to study these impacts as well as the consumer behavior and psychology of the millennial generation and help organizations and businesses to cope up with the demands and requirements of the millennial generation.

**Objectives**

1. To analyze the impact of social media on food choices of millennials.
2. To analyze the consumer behavior of millennials.
3. To identify the process of purchase intention of millennials while making food choices.

**Limitations of the study**

This study is restricted to the millennial generation only, that is individuals from age group 15 to 25. Thus, this study has a small sample size. Some issues were faced while collecting secondary data as the topic of research is relatively recent.

**Respondents**

A total of 56 people responded to the questionnaire circulated as a primary data source for the study. Out of the 56 responses 54 responses were valid. Approximately 70% of the respondents were aged above 20 and 25% were aged below 20. People from various fields responded to the questionnaire; from interior designers, chefs and medical students to software developers and architects. A majority of the respondents were students.

**Literature Review**

Monique Thomas Published on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021 'This is How the Instagram Algorithm Works in 2022, <https://later.com/blog/how-instagram-algorithm-works/>'. The article explains the working of various algorithms used by the social networking platform Instagram. The algorithms are applied for the Feed (posts), stories, Explore page and the newly launched Reels. These algorithms are studied and used by influencers to increase customer engagement. The four factors that influence algorithms are Information about the post, Information about the person who has posted, User's Activity on Instagram and User's interaction history. Other factors include Time spent on Instagram, Likes, comments, Saves, taps on profile. Based on these factors, Instagram algorithm calculates how likely is an individual to interact with a post, which is known as Score of Interest, which will determine the order in which posts will be displayed on an individual's Instagram feed.



An article by Sarah Garone 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021, "How Does Social media affect eating habits?"

<https://www.verywellfit.com/how-does-social-media-affect-eating-habits-5188578>. The article talks about how social media has impacted almost every aspect of life, including influence on diet right from type of food to the portion sizes. The article also discusses the pros and cons of effects of social media on eating. Social media influencers an individual follows inspires and encourages the individual towards a positive change in his diet. Social media also provides valuable skills and information, creates a positive food community and exposes an individual to new recipes, diets and lifestyle. However, there are some drawbacks too; distracted eating may lead to over or under consumption. At times, following influencers too much may create unrealistic beliefs and expectations which may lead to disappointment. One must curate his/her feed by following people who have a certified course or degree backing the information or expertise they are posting.

Mr. Andrew Arnold in an article on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019, "How Social Media Can Impact Your Consumption Habits" <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2019/01/14/how-social-media-can-impact-your-consumption-habits/?sh=10c4c9d82796> discusses the negative as well as positive impact of social media on eating. The negative impacts include issues about body image, overeating triggered by looking at food pictures frequently. Another aspect is food photography. Some establishments have banned photographing of food as they believe it degrades the dining experience. It's difficult to enjoy food or make healthy food choices when an individual is choosing a food item based on its Instagram potential. The brighter side is that there are qualified nutritionists, chefs, dieticians out there using social media as platform to share diet advice or information on a healthy lifestyle. Social media is also promoting cross cultural communication, exposing people to new cuisines and widening their food horizons.

Somi Arian, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019, "The Millennial Mindset: 10 Factors That Drive Millennials' Consumer Behavior" by <https://smartcookiemedia.com/the-millennial-mindset/>. The article talks about various factors that influence the millennial mindset and shape their consumer behavior. The millennial generation has an abundance of choice when it comes to selecting any category of products as compared to the older generations. This abundance has its positive as well as negative aspects such as a product not being able to survive the competition due to having other very similar range of products which are compared by millennials. There is no limitation of time and space as well information to the millennials; everything is at their fingertips. Millennials adapt to the changing technology as well as trends quite easily. Thus, they do not get attached to their previously used products too much, thus making them less loyal as customers. Environmental factors and climate change affect the consumer behavior as well. Companies need to show their sustainability and their care for the environment in order to garner the trust of the audience. Also, millennial generation has more of a cloud-based thinking inclination. They believe in subscribing/renting services or products rather than owning or investing in them permanently.

### Advantages of Social Media Marketing for your Business

Website- <https://www.bluefountainmedia.com/blog/advantages-of-social-media-marketing>  
The article talks about social media marketing and its advantages in growing a business. It is regarded as one of the most effective ways of marketing. Social media marketing aids in increasing brand awareness by engaging with a broader customer platform and having a higher chance of new customer acquisition. Companies should work on their search engine optimization strategies to make the most out of social media marketing. Each post, image or other content put up on social media may convert the viewers into new customers at the same time increasing the company website's traffic. Social media provides a more personalized



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experience to customers thus increasing customer satisfaction and improved brand loyalty. Most importantly, social media is the most cost effective forms of marketing and only requires the company to invest time in order to get desired results.

Social media marketing: The Ultimate Guide, Published on the Website- <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-marketing> The article talks about social media and its effective usage as a tool in social media marketing. Social media marketing is the process of creating content for social media platforms to promote your products and services, build community with target audience and drive traffic to your business. The various platforms used are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and other platforms. These platforms can be used as a tool in marketing by increasing customer engagement and interaction and increasing the traffic towards the company website, promoting the products and increasing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Social media marketing increases brand awareness, generates new leads and fosters relationships with the customers. It also helps to keep a check on the competitors. Different platforms can be utilized depending upon the requirement of the companies and their customer profiles.

Hawra Hashem published on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, 13 Positive effects of Social Media on our society today, by <https://www.kubbco.com/13-positive-effects-of-social-media-on-our-society-today/> The article talks about the benefits of social media for the society. Social media helps individuals to connect and empowers businesses to build audience. Mindful use of social media can benefit a lot to inspire, educate and gain knowledge and information. Social media helps in enhancing the customer experience and inspiring creativity. It helps in brand awareness and offering quick support and better communication. It helps to drive traffic towards the company website and increasing engagement. It helps in growth of businesses as people provide honest feedbacks and reviews.

The positive impact of Millennials on your Social Media Marketing strategies 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018

<https://sunnylandingpages.com/blog/positive-impact-millennials-social-media-marketing-strategies/#:~:text=Through%20the%20social%20marketing%2C%20the,quite%20beneficial%20to%20the%20company> The article talks about how millennials can benefit a business in various ways. Attracting millennials is a smart move for many of the business owners as it can have a positive impact on their social media marketing as millennials are the most vivid users of social media and like quality content. Millennials have a strong networking and influence which can prove beneficial to companies. They are well aware of the social happenings around the world and may purchase a particular company/brand's product only for supporting their cause towards the society. The millennials are considered as the generation with the highest purchasing power. They are believed to be trend setters and adapt to changes rather quickly. Millennials provide companies with honest feedbacks and reviews through various social media platforms and refer your products in their community if they are satisfied.

Zadrian Ardi, Shania Andrisa Putri 'The Analysis of the social media impact on the millennial generation behavior and social interactions' published in Vol 1, No 2 (2020).

The article analyzes the general impacts of social media usage on the millennials regarding social behavior and interactions. Social media has its own benefits as well as shortcomings. The benefits include easy access to information and knowledge, better communication, and being able to connect with other individuals across the globe easily. The shortcomings include poor mental health, general addiction, anxiety and depression, poor body image and unrealistic expectations.



Angela Woo, 'Understanding the research on millennial shopping behaviors' 4th June 2018

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/06/04/understanding-the-research-on-millennial-shopping-behaviors/> This article analyzes the millennial shopping behavior and helps to understand their consumer psychology. The millennial generation wants their purchases to make them feel good and relate with the products on a personal level. They tend to value experiences over material things and are into experiential buying. They like sharing the products with their community and recommend the products if they are happy about them. They tend to shop promiscuously and do not have an issue in trying out new things. They trust peer generated endorsements more and believe in word of mouth and product reviews by influencers more.

Ryan Jenkins, "5 Need to Know characteristics of the new millennial buyer" <https://www.inc.com/ryan-jenkins/selling-to-millennial-buyers-5-things-you-need-to-know.html>, this article talks about the common characteristics of the millennial generation. Buyers are evolving faster than sellers in today's time. There is a growing gap between buyers and sellers. Millennial buyers are influenced by consumer behavior, reviews, personal network recommendations and this impacts in their decision making. They are self-educating and define their needs on their own before reaching out to a particular company for their products. Millennial buyers are raising their expectations and are interested in IQ over EQ while making buying decisions.

### Research Methodology

The type of research methodology used in this study is Quantitative research methodology and is based on the data collected which is converted into charts and graphs which makes it easier to interpret and carry out the research.

### Primary Data

- A Questionnaire was prepared and circulated among individuals with the help of Google Forms, with a sample size of 50 people.
- Personal interactions with acquaintances.

### Secondary Data

- Online articles
- Newspapers and magazines

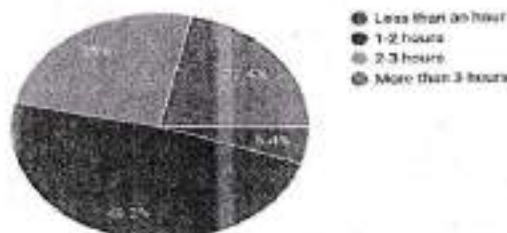
### Data Analysis And Interpretation

#### Time spent on Social Media

How much time do you spend on social media in a day?

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56 responses



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The purpose of this question was to understand the amount of time spent by individuals on social media daily. Of the total respondents, 5.4% of the individuals used social media for **less than an hour daily**, which is the least percentage. A majority of the respondents used social media for **1-2 hours** with a percentage of **48.2%**. Of the total respondents, **25%** used social media for **2-3 hours** and **21.4%** used social media for **more than 3 hours**.

Most of the individuals spent 1-2 hours on social media daily and the least percentage of them used social media for less than an hour.

### Types of Social Media platforms used by individuals

Which social media platforms do you use the most?

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56 responses



**Instagram** was the most used social media platform with a percentage of **92.9%**. **WhatsApp** was the second most used platform with a percentage of **78.6%**. **YouTube** was the third most used platform with a percentage of **67.9%**.

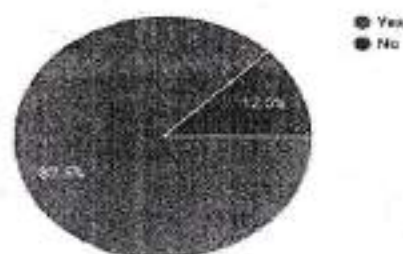
Other social media platforms used by individuals include Reddit, LinkedIn, Snapchat and Pinterest.

### Awareness about the Algorithms used by Social Media platforms

Are you aware that algorithms are used by social media platforms?

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56 responses





Of the total respondents, 87.5% of the respondents were aware that algorithms were used by various social media platforms. 12.5% of the respondents were not aware that algorithms were used by social media platforms.

### Keeping a track of the current trends

Do you keep a track of the current millennial trends?

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56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 44.6% of the respondents kept a track of the current millennial trends. 37.5% did not keep a track of the current trends and 17.9% kept a track of the current trends sometimes. It can be interpreted that most of the respondents keep a track of the current millennial trends.

### Awareness about the Psychological impact of social media on mindsets

Are you aware of the psychological impact social media has on one's mindsets?

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56 responses



Out of the total respondents 92.9% of the respondents were aware of the psychological impact of social media on individual's mindsets while 7.1% of the respondents were not aware of the psychological impact of social media.

### Various Pages followed by individuals on Social Media

What kind of pages do you follow on social media?

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56 responses



were used by  
at algorithms

The most followed pages were **Food and Lifestyle**, followed by **Health and Fitness** and **Entertainment**. Other pages included Art and Design, News and Information, Education, Wildlife, Politics and Architecture.

### Influence of Social Media on Lifestyle choices of Individuals

How much does social media  
impact/influence your lifestyle  
choices?

56 responses

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- Always
- Sometimes
- Depending on situation
- Never

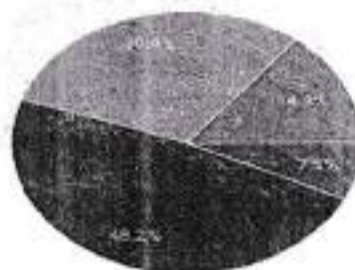
Out of the total respondents, a percentage of 64.3% responded that social media impacts their lifestyle choices depending on the situation. 25% responded that social media influences their choices sometimes and 7.1% responded that social media never impacts their lifestyle choices. A negligible number of respondents said that social media always impacts their lifestyle choices. It can be interpreted that social media impacts the lifestyle choices of individuals depending upon the circumstances.

### Influence of Social Media while deciding What to Eat

How often do you get influenced  
by social media while deciding  
what to eat?

56 responses

 Copy




- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Out of the total respondents, 48.2% responded that social media influences their eating decisions **Sometimes**. 30.4% responded that social media **Rarely** influences their eating decisions. 14.3% responded that social media **Never** impacts their eating decisions. Only 7.1% responded that social media **Always** impacts their eating decisions. It can be interpreted that most of the individuals get impacted by social media at times while making eating decisions.

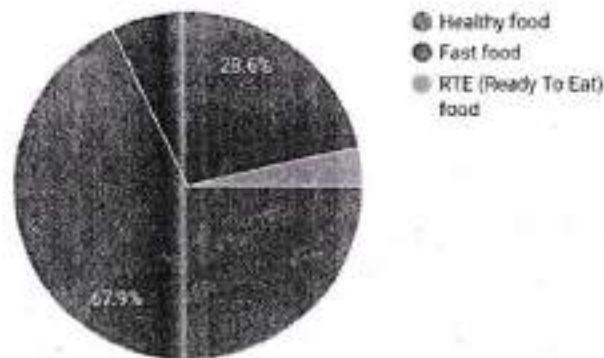


## Kind of food preferred to be eaten by individuals

What kind of food do you prefer eating?

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56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 67.9% of individuals preferred eating **Healthy food** while 28.6% preferred eating **Fast food**. Only 3% of the respondents preferred eating RTE (Ready-To-Eat) foods.

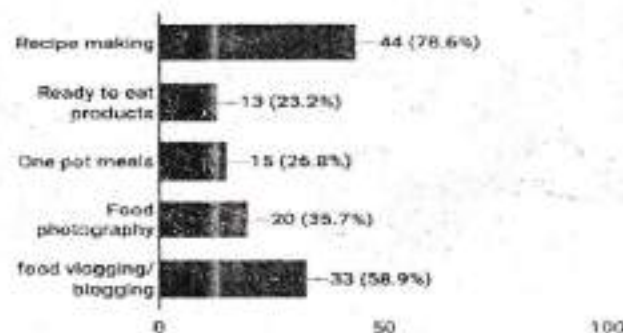
It can be interpreted that most of the individuals prefer to eat healthy food.

## Food related content watched most often by individuals on Social Media

What kind of food related content do you watch most often on social media?

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56 responses

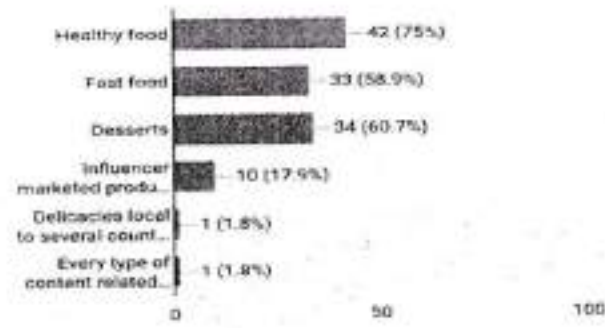


The most food related content watched by individuals on social media were Recipe making videos, followed by Food vlogging/blogging posts. Other content included ready to eat food, one pot meals and food photography.

Type of Food related posts preferred to be seen by individuals on social media

Which type of food related posts do you prefer seeing on social media?

56 responses

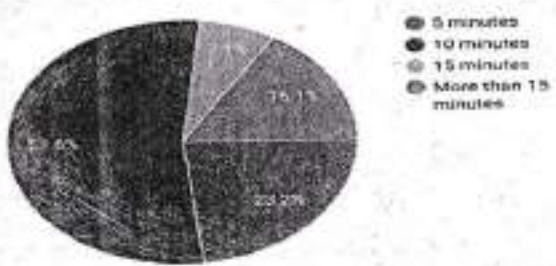


Healthy food (75%) was the most preferred to be seen by individuals followed by Desserts (60.7%) and Fast Food (58.9%). Other posts included influencer marketed products and delicacies local to countries.

Amount of time spent in selection of food choices

How much amount of time do you take in selection of your food choices?

56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 53.6% respondents took 10 minutes in making food selection choices, followed by 23.2% who took 5 minutes and 16.1% respondents who took more than 15 minutes. 7.1% of the respondents took 15 minutes in selection of food choices.

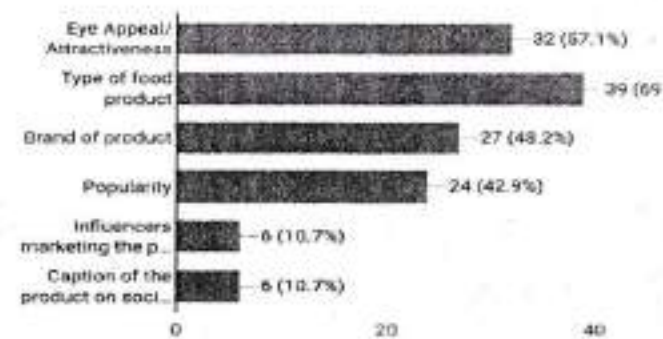
It can be interpreted that most of the respondents took approximately 10 minutes in selection of food choices.



## Parameters for selection of food choices influenced by social media

What are the parameters on which you make selection of your food choice influenced by social media?

56 responses

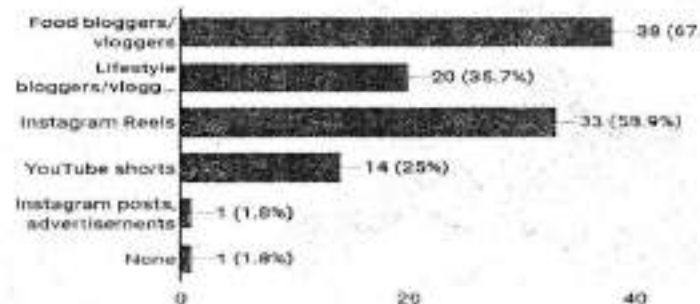


The most used parameter for selection of food choices was Type of food product, followed by Eye appeal/Attractiveness and Brand of product. Other parameters included Popularity, Influencers marketing the product and Caption of the post on social media (marketing). The least influential parameter was influencers marketing the product.

## Category of influencers most influential while buying a food product

Which category of influencers are you most influenced by while buying a certain food product?

56 responses



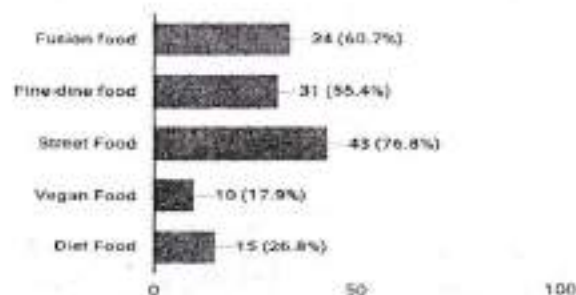
Out of all, Food bloggers/vloggers (67%) were the most influential for individuals while buying a certain food product. They were followed by Instagram reels (58.9%) and Lifestyle bloggers/vloggers (35.7%). Other influencing factors included YouTube shorts, Instagram posts/advertisements.

### Acceptance of food products which are influenced by Social media

What kind of food products would you like to try which are influenced by social media?

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56 responses



The category of food product which individuals would like to try the most which are influenced by social media is Street food (76.8%), followed by Fusion food (40.7%) and Fine dine food (55.4%). Other categories include Vegan food (17.9%) and Diet food (26.8%).

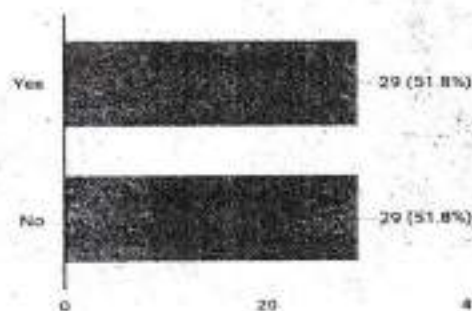
Thus it can be interpreted that Street food is the most influential category among the respondents which they would like to try by being influenced by social media.

### Changes observed by individuals in their food choices which are influenced by social media

Have you observed changes in your food choices which are influenced by social media?

☐ Copy

56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 50% responded that they observed changes in their food choices influenced by social media while 50% responded that they did not observe any changes in food choices influenced by social media.



### Impact observed by individuals after changes in food choices influenced by social media

What was the impact you observed after changes in food choices influenced by social media?

56 responses



- Improved eating habits
- Deteriorated eating habits
- No changes

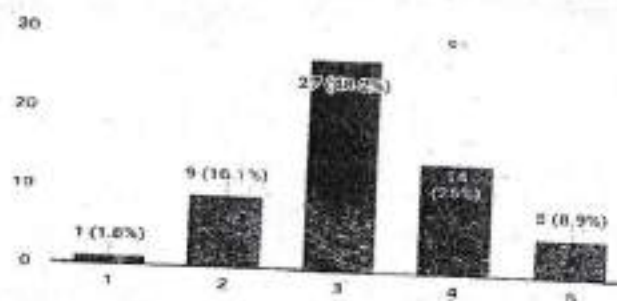
Of the total respondents, 58.9% respondents did not observe any changes in food choices influenced by social media, 26.8% respondents observed improved eating habits while 14.3% complained of deteriorated eating habits.

It can be interpreted that most of the respondents did not observe any changes in their food choices influenced by social media.

### Likelihood of recommendation for making changes in food choices influenced by social media

On a scale of 1-5, How much would you recommend making changes in food choices influenced by social media?

56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 48.2% were likely to recommend making changes in food choices influenced by social media while 25% were not likely to recommend making changes influenced by social media.

### Changes in Food Product buying behavior influenced by social media

Have you observed any changes in your food product buying behaviour which are influenced by social media?

56 responses



Out of the total respondents, 58.9% respondents observed changes in food product buying behavior influenced by social media while 41.1% did not observe any changes.

### Comparison of the social media advertised product and the product in reality

Was the advertised product you purchased inspired by social media same in reality?

56 responses

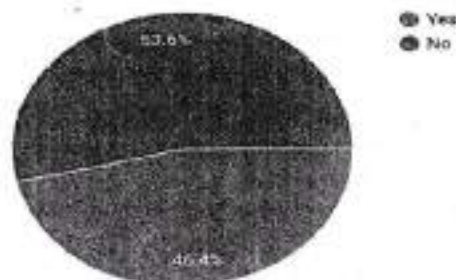


Of the total respondents 55.4% observed that the advertised product on social media and the product in reality were the same, while 44.6% observed that the products received in reality were not exactly the same as the ones advertised on social media.

### Product expectations post purchase

Did the product you purchased inspired by social media meet your expectations?

56 responses





Out of the total respondents, 53.6% responded that the product purchased inspired by social media did not meet their expectations while 46.4% responded that the products met their expectations.

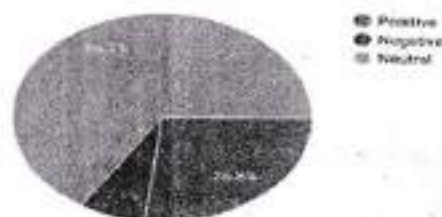
It can be interpreted that most of the respondents were not satisfied with the products they received in reality post purchase.

#### Observation of the impact post changes in food buying behavior influenced by social media

What was the impact you observed after changes in food product buying behaviour influenced by social media?

56 responses

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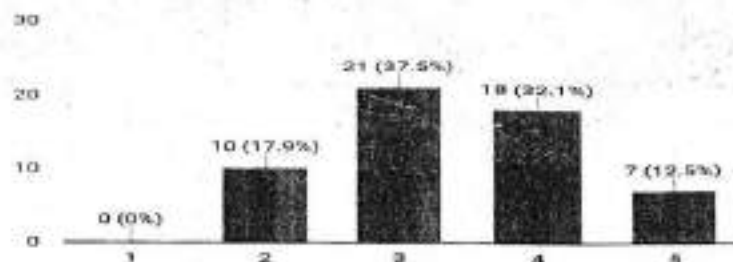
Out of the total respondents, 66.1% gave a neutral response and did not observe any change in their food buying behavior. 26.8% gave a positive response saying that they observed a positive impact in their food buying behavior influenced by social media. Only 7.1% gave a negative response saying they observed negative impact in their food buying behavior.

#### Likelihood of recommendation for making changes in food product buying behavior influenced by social media

On a scale of 1-5, How much would you recommend making changes in food product buying behaviour influenced by social media?

56 responses

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Out of the total respondents, 55.4% were likely to recommend making changes in food product buying behavior influenced by social media while 44.6% were not likely to recommend making changes in food product buying behavior influenced by social media.

millennial generation is attracted towards change and adapts to changes quite easily as compared to the older generation.

Most of the millennials are likely to follow and are aware of the current trends.

Millennials walk alongside the developing technologies.

Millennial generation is aware of the psychological impact social media has on its users.

Social media plays an integral part of the lives of the millennial generation.

Instagram and WhatsApp are the most frequently used social media platforms.

Social media influences the lifestyle choices of individuals most of the times, depending upon the circumstances.

Millennials are turning towards healthy food and are thoughtful about their food choices.

They rely on influencers and bloggers while buying a food product.

Social media influences the food product buying behavior of millennials.

Most of the millennials are not satisfied with the product received in reality against the one advertised on social media.

### 1 And Suggestions

After analyzing the study, it can be concluded that social media does impact the food choices and buying behavior of the millennial generation in some ways and has a significant impact on them. The algorithms used by social media platforms shape the choices and influence individuals and impact them significantly. The impacts observed are positive as well as negative. Appropriate usage of social media can work wonders and help individuals in leading a healthy lifestyle.

The millennial generation needs to keep a check on their social media usage and should be aware of the psychological as well as physiological impact it has on them.

Appropriate use of social media can help millennials gain a lot of information and can help them lead a better lifestyle.

Individuals should not go overboard with their expectations influenced by social media and be aware of the practical world. False expectations can lead to negative impacts and poor mental health.

Millennials should verify the sources they follow on social media before getting influenced by them and following them in real life.

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