



A STUDY OF FOOD BLOGS- A NEWER TREND THAT CUSTOMERS FOLLOW WHILE CHOOSING RESTAURANTS

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Abstract

Today internet has become the integral part of day today life and the current era has truly become the communication era. Food blogging is a complex mixture of “foodie”, “blog writing” and “photography”. It is a type of blog that interlinks a gourmet interest in food, blog writing, and food photography. As long as it is blog about food it is considered as food blog. These bloggers are often termed as “foodies” and the blogs are written to influence followers and earn profits. Apart from the content of the blog, the blogger’s personality, persuading capacity, and engagement style are the main contributing factors on the amount of influence a blogger gains. The purpose of this study is to examine customer’s perceptions towards reviews and recommendations of food blogs while making the choice of restaurants they would like to visit. Also further the researcher wants to understand the relation between food bloggers review and recommendations and its impact on the customer’s choice of restaurants they would want to visit. It also ascertains various factors that motivates and influences customers to make the choice of restaurants. For this, with the help of quota sampling method 141 respondents were selected and data was collected though structured questionnaire.

Key words: brand marque, social media, food bloggers, engagement style.

Introduction:

Today internet has become the integral part of day today life and the current era has truly become the communication era. Practically everyone Google for every problem like which dress to wear, what food to eat, where to eat etc. Thus, all answers are available with more than one option.

What is a blog?

Today the most popular form to get any reviews or recommendations is weblog popularly known as 'blog'. A blog is regularly updated website or webpage either used for personal use or to fulfil a business need typically run by an individual or a small group.

Almost all information of any business sectors from social, economic or cultural aspect is readily available in the blog.

Generally a blog optimizes a company's rank on search engine. They usually share information about a given topic and helps to become an expert in that particular sector. These blogs are used to attract visitors to the site and help them to turn into leads. Thus, these blogs cultivate an online community that engages them with an audience.

Food blogging: A changing game!

Food blogging is a complex mixture of "foodie", "blog writing" and "photography". It is a type of blog that interlinks a gourmet interest in food, blog writing, and food photography. As long as it is blog about food it is considered as food blog. These bloggers are often termed as "foodies" and the blogs are written to influence followers and earn profits. The majority of food bloggers use pictures taken by himself/herself keeping major focus on food photography. They manage their own blogs, write about various interesting topics related to food as a food enthusiast.

Food blogging can be for recipes, food/restaurant reviews, food and travel or food photography.

Mostly these blogs have overlapping elements of all the above elements or few of these elements. It's basically like a personal diary and there is no real rule of writing a food blog. It generally written to influence individuals in their decision making with regards to any restaurant or food choice.

Blogging as a marketing tool:

Today Blogging is the most common marketing and brand development tool for hospitality sector comprising of restaurants, meal delivery services, catering companies, private chefs, and allied food and beverage sector. Influential bloggers are paid to draw a specific audience and build their reputation by consistently posting quality content. Over a period of time these bloggers grab the audience's attention and build a good connection. They are able to influence these followers affecting their purchasing decisions.

Apart from the content of the blog, the blogger's personality, persuading capacity, and engagement style are the main contributing factors on the amount of influence a blogger gains. Experimenting with new flavours, exploring new cuisines, evolving personal tastes and expanding to new areas have been the defining "eating out" trends in Pune city. Chefs are experimenting, Gourmands are opening up to new palate pleasures right from flavours of the Far East or enjoying a taste of Europe beyond pasta and pizza. The restaurateurs are testing the market in locations removed from the traditional food hubs. Some known vloggers in Pune are Maanas Shah, Natasha diddee, Sailee Paranjpe, Pune Bhukkkad, Foodpreneur, Craving souls Pune etc.

Review of Literature

Adliah Nur (2015), states the factors that affects consumers behaviour and attitude while choosing restaurants. Further it's stated that food bloggers have become influencers and have been setting the benchmark for consumers while deciding the choice of restaurants and its worth. Still there exists uncertainty in consumer's attitude and behaviour.

Nehal Waleed and Ranim Azzam (2020), state the factors influencing to Egyptian consumers while choosing restaurant, their preferences of ordering dishes. They also mentioned that food bloggers have become influences on social media of industry in last few years but there are many consumers who are still not following either of them thus their impact on consumers is still not very sure.

Alka Pandey, Nutan Kumari, Padmalochan Chouhan (2020) state the video blogging is new concept and trending on social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. The impact of vlogging on consumer's choice and the authenticity were checked and further they mentioned that more than 50% consumers follow the rating and check the reviews while choosing the restaurants. Also the food vloggers creates consciousness in regards to the poor quality of menu served and the hygiene standards of the restaurant.

Lynn Schutte (2018), state that through video blogging, video blogger can reach out to mass numbers of follower through numbers different recipes whereas food blogging is restricted to a certain category of consumers where objective of blogger is to target niche product.

Theodosia C. Nathalia, Carla Kansius, Eunice Felicia, Ida Ayu Amanda Kalpikasari (2017), state the factors determining behavior of consumers towards their intention of healthy eating habits based on reviews and recommendation of food bloggers. Further they also mentioned role of food blogger is important to promote a positive change in consumers intention towards healthy eating.

Shriya S Nair, Vinod L (2021), stated, that most of the young consumers follow food blogger in seek to tryout something new all the time, which is many a time under peer pressure, on their own they do not have any specifications. Further they say that impact of social media on youth is very indirect and has neutral opinion.

Suci Sandi Wachyuni, Kadek Wiweka, Indri Softia (2021), state the reviews and recommendations of blogger does not controls the consumer behaviour where as brand marquee plays a important role in purchasing choice.

Rashi Shah, Kritanshi Mishra (2021), state the influencing factors of food blogging that has changed the consumers attitude towards consumption of healthy foods positively. It is true that most of the consumers are influenced by the food blogger

Stephanie Bun, Yeshika Alversia (2020), states that the sectors of food and beverage should be more careful and cautious about their Instagram account as food bloggers have set their influences on engaging customers.

Research Methodology:

Objectives

1. To understand the demographic profile of customers reviewing food blogs for choice of restaurants.
2. To understand customers perception towards reviews and recommendation of food blogging for choice of restaurants.
3. To ascertain various influencing factors of food blogging that impact customer's choice of restaurants.

Limitations of the study:

1. The study is purely based on the information received through the limited scope and purview of the survey.
2. The study is relevant to Pune city's existing market scenario and the information, judgment and predictions of the respondents may differ accordingly with time, status, mind-set and geographical zone.

Collection of Primary Data:

To study the objectives, a questionnaire was designed for the general population. The questionnaire was circulated to 250 respondents using Google survey.

Secondary Data: In addition to the primary data, an informal discussion with few respondents was considered to understand their opinion on the objectives of this study. The available secondary data in the form of research papers, journals, websites, magazines and other sources has also been referred while designing the instrument. The purpose of this reference was to support the preliminary data.

Selection of Sample:

Given the nature of the study, the units of the population and the different constraints, the researcher has selected a sample that benefits the requirement of the study. The based on nature of the study, possibility of assessing the data and respondents' willingness.

Sample Size

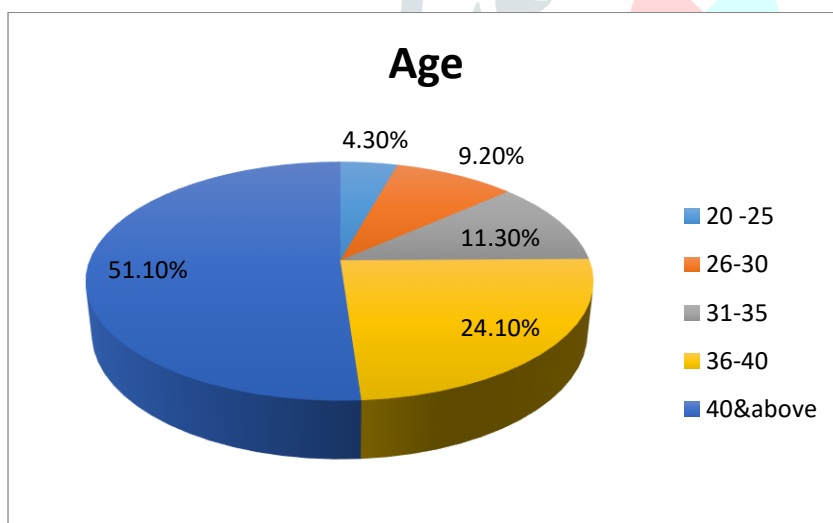
The random sampling technique was used for data collection. The questionnaire was circulated amongst 250 respondents and a total of 141 sample was received and analyzed for this study.

Scope of the study:

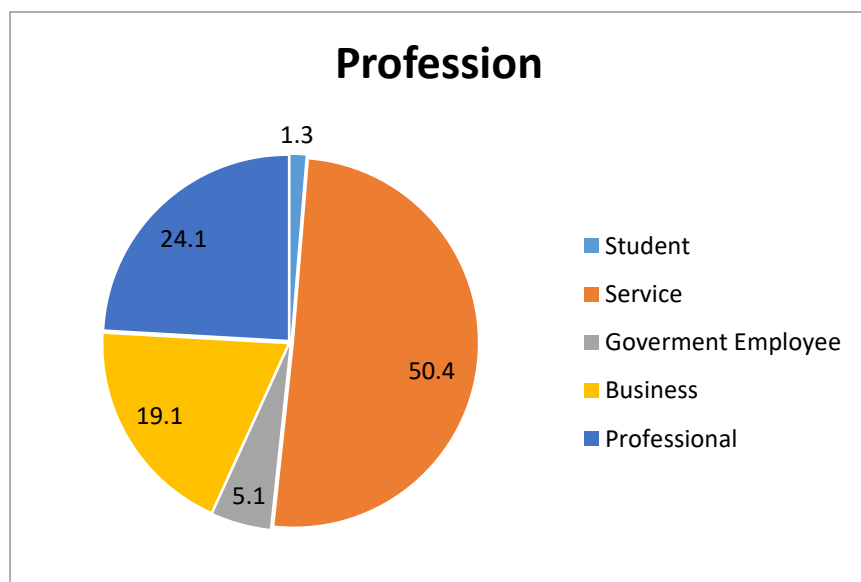
This research attempts to explore various factors of food bloggers that impacts customer's perception in making choice of restaurants they visit. The study is limited to Pune city.

DATA ANALYSIS DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

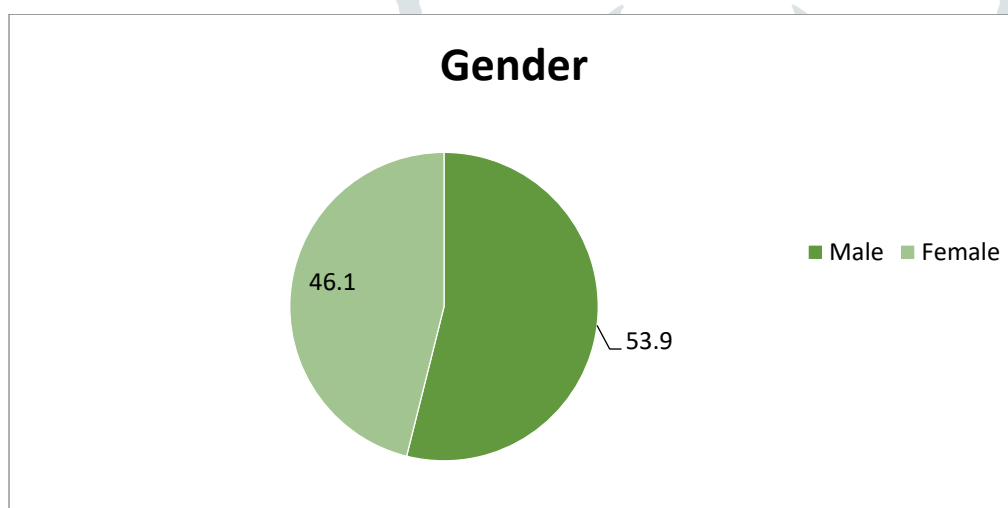
The below mentioned analysis is done on the responses gathered from the respondents from Pune city. The findings in the study shows the impact of food blogging on customers when they make a choice to visit a restaurant.



Interpretation: The graph denotes the age distribution of the respondents included in the study sample. Among total 141 respondents only 4.3%, respondents were in an age group of 20-25 years, 9.2% in an age group of 26-30 years, 11.3% respondents in an age group of 31-35 years 24.1% in an age group of 36-40 years and maximum (51.1%) of respondents fall in the age group of 40 and above.

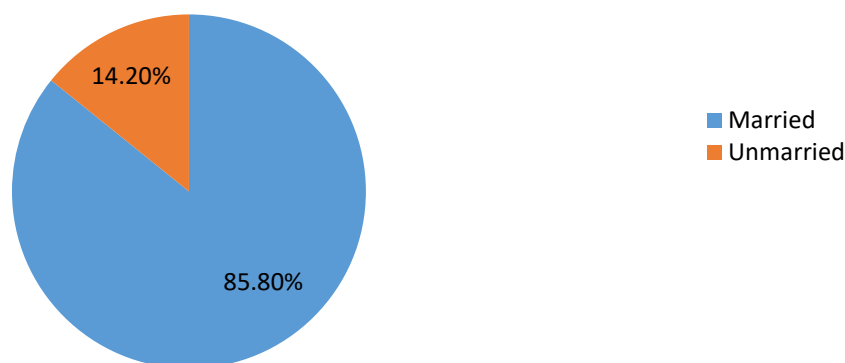


Interpretation: Most (50.4%) of the respondents are in Service, 24.1% respondents are professionals. The least (1.3 %) respondents are students amongst all, whereas the proportion of respondents in business is 19.1% and 5.1% are government employees. It is observed that the respondents in service category are more who follow food bloggers while choosing a restaurant.



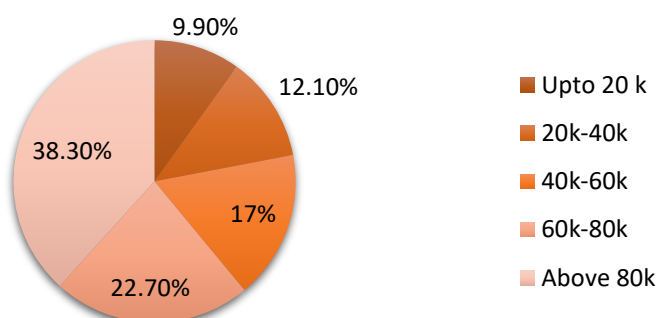
Interpretation: The graph denotes the gender distribution of the respondents included in the study sample. Among total 141 respondents the proportion of female respondents was nearly 46.1% whereas the percentage of male respondents was 53.9% respectively. It can be observed from the table that the proportion of males following food blogging is more than of the female respondents.

Marital Status



Interpretation: The graph denotes the marital status distribution of the respondents included in the study sample. Among total 141 respondents the married proportion of respondents was nearly 85.8% whereas the percentage of unmarried respondents was 14.2% respectively.

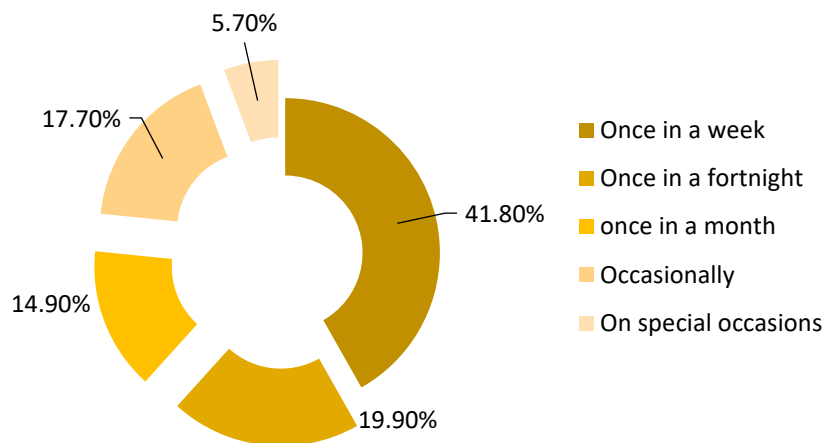
Monthly Income



Interpretation: The respondents were from different economic status as they belong to varied demographic profiles and income plays a major role in the person's choice of lifestyle.

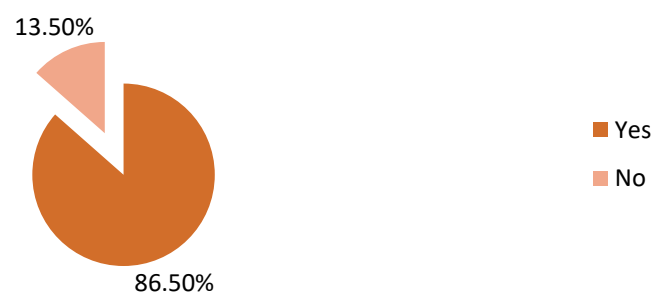
In this, 9.9% of the respondents draw a monthly income up to 20,000, 12 % of the respondents draw 20,000-40,000, 17% of the respondents draw 40,000-60,000, 22.7 % of the respondents draw 60,000-80,000, 38.3% of the respondents draw above 80,000, which showcases that the people from income group above 80,000 follow food bloggers the most.

How often do you eat outside in restaurants(Casual/Fine dine)?



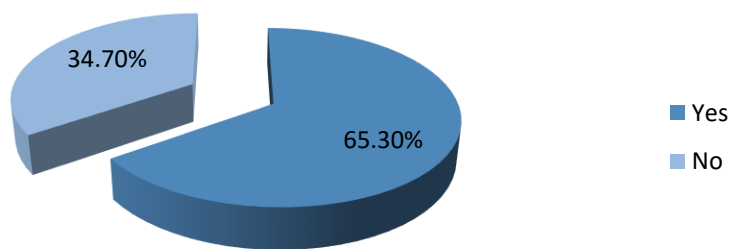
Interpretation: The above figures denotes the frequency of dining out in restaurant. The proportion of respondents going out for food in restaurant once a week is almost 41.8%. 19.9 % of the respondents prefer to dine out in restaurant once a fortnight. Almost 14.9 % of the respondent dine out once a month and 17.7 dine out occasionally, whereas 5.7% respondents prefers to dine out on special occasions. From the above graph it can be inferred that frequency of dining out in a restaurant once a month is quite high among the respondents.

Are you aware of Food Blogs that give reviews of restaurants and food dishes served , its ambience etc on social media?



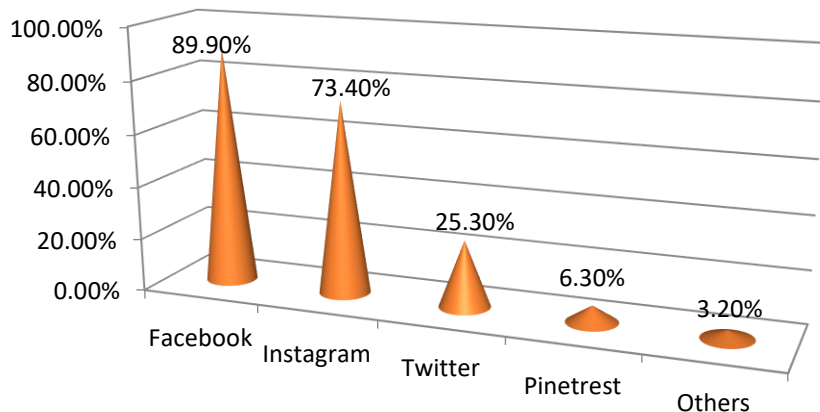
Interpretation: The respondents were further asked about food blogs that give reviews of restaurants and food dishes served, its ambience etc on social media. It can be observed from the above pie chart that almost 86.5% are aware and 13.5 % of respondents are not aware of food blogs.

Do you follow food blogs on social media while making choice of Restaurant?

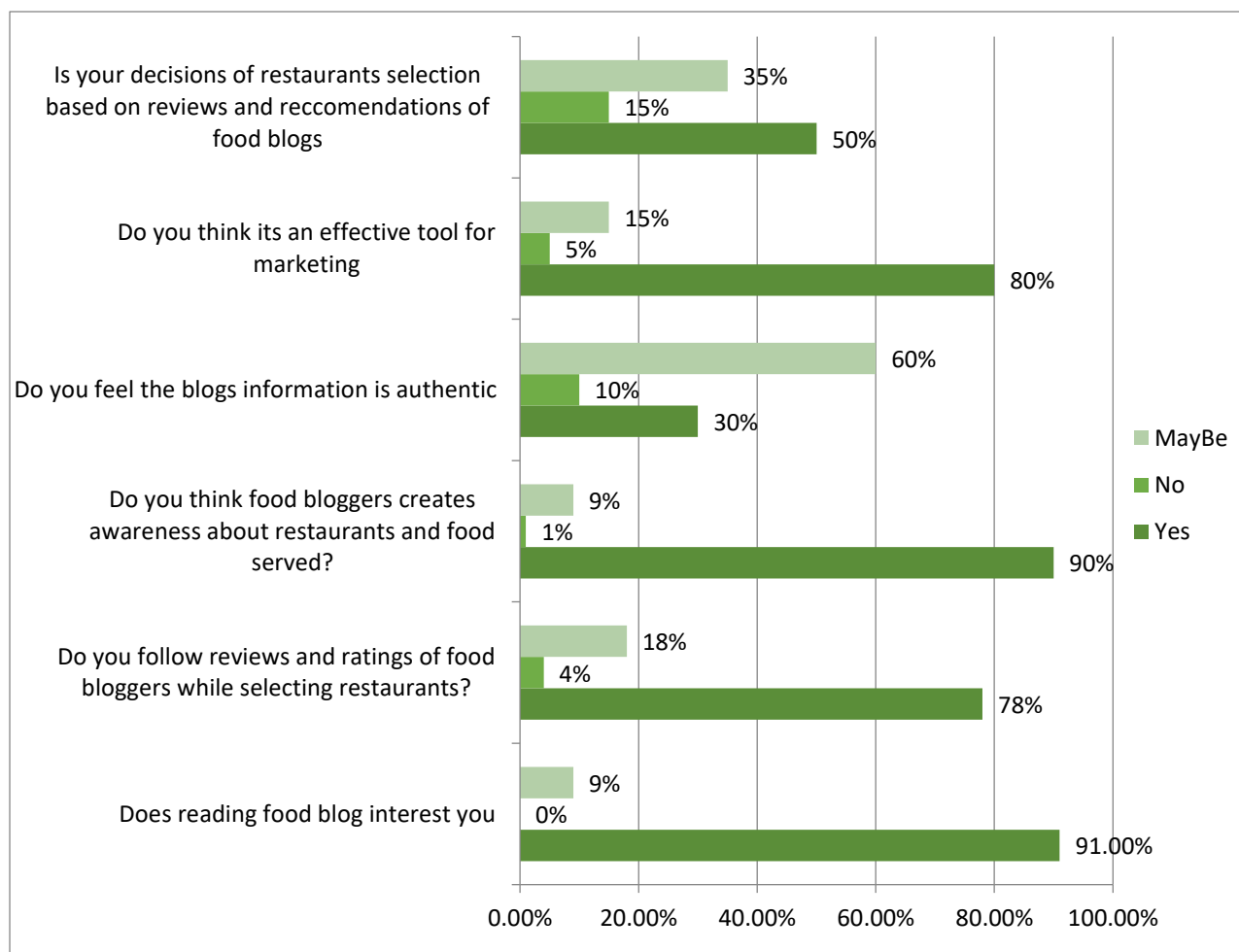


Interpretation: 65.3% respondents follow food blogs on social media while making choice of Restaurant, while 34.7% don't follow food blogs while selecting a restaurant.

Generally which social media platform you follow the food blogs on?



Interpretation: It can be observed from the above graph that almost 89.9% of the respondents use Facebook, 73.4% for the respondents follow Instagram, Twitter, Pinetrest and other social media is 25.3%, 6.3% and 3.2% respectively.



Interpretation: The above graphs expresses various deciding factors about food blogs while selecting a restaurant.

91% of the respondents have shown keen interest in reading and following food blogs.

78% respondents do follow reviews and ratings of food bloggers while selecting restaurant, whereas only 4% respondents did not follow any reviews and 18% respondents sometimes follow the same. It can be seen that reviews and ratings of food bloggers also plays big role in selecting restaurant.

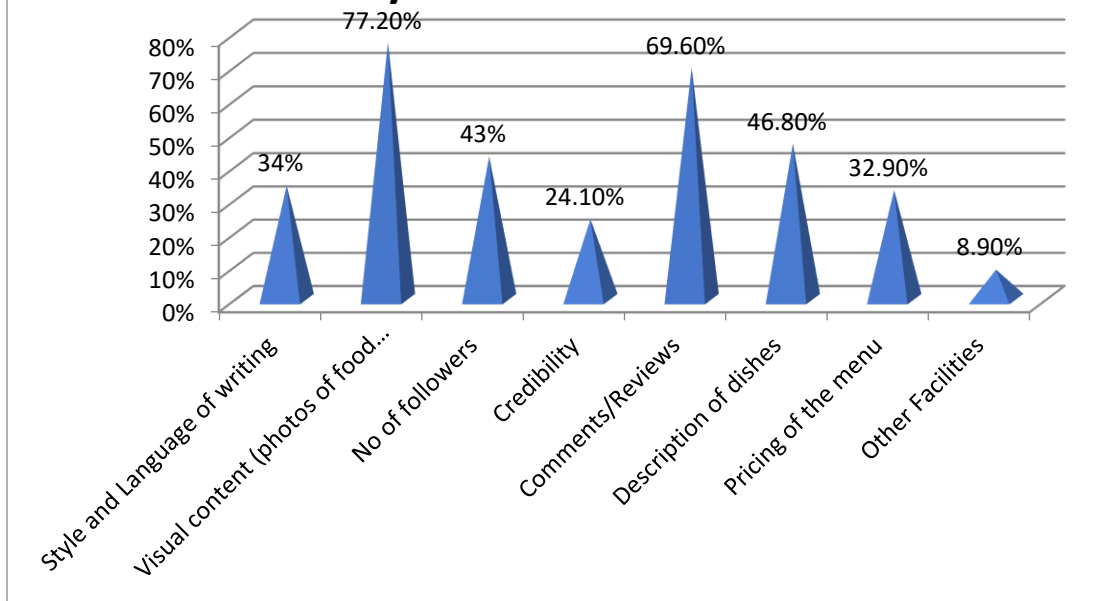
90% of respondents agree to the fact that food bloggers do create awareness about restaurants and food served and only 9% feel that it may be creating the above .Thus, it is very obvious that food bloggers do create awareness about restaurants and food served amongst customers while selecting restaurants.

Only 30% of respondents feel that the information of food blogs is authentic, while 60% feel it may or may not be authentic.

80% responded feel that food blogs are effective marketing tools, whereas only 15% feels that it may be an effective tool.

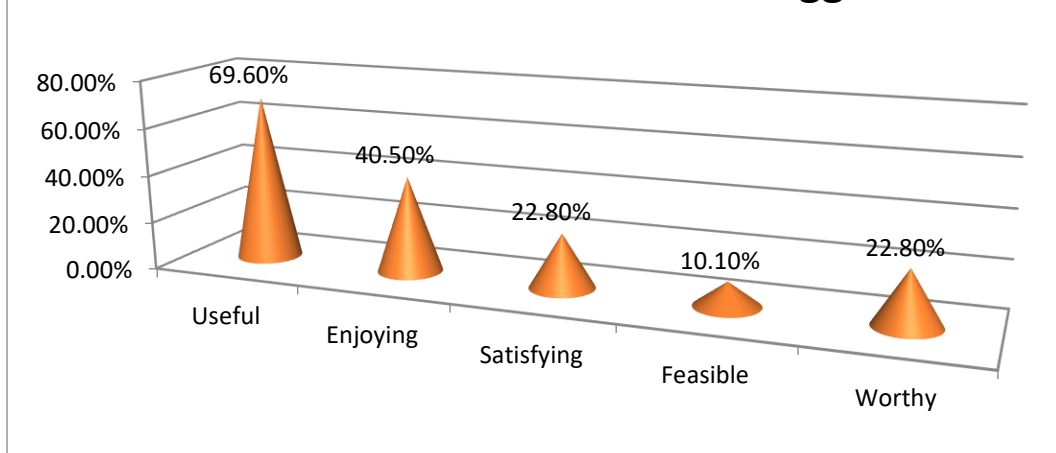
Almost 50% of the respondent's decision of selecting restaurant is based on food blogs information, reviews recommendation provided, while 35% respondent's decision may depend on food blogs reviews and only 15% respondent's decisions is not based on food blogs.

Which according to you are the factors that motivates you to follow food blogs and influence your choice of restaurants?



The above graph shows that most (77.2%)of the respondents are motivated by visual content ie. the food photos, 69.6% are motivated by the comments and reviews of blogs , 46.8% respondents are motivated by description of dishes, 43% are motivated by number of followers of food blog, 34% of the respondents say that style and language of writing food blogs motivates them, 32.9% are motivated to follow food blogs because of the pricing of menu, whereas only 24.1% are motivated to follow because of credibility.

How do you percieve the reccomendations of the food bloggers?



Interpretation: It can be observed from the above graph that 69.6% find it useful, while 40.5% enjoy, 22.8% find the recommendations satisfying and worthy while only 10.1% find it feasible.

FINDINGS

- Among total 141 respondents most (53.9%) of the respondents were male 46.1% are female.
- Most (51.1%) respondents fall in the age group of 40 and above,
- Most 85.8% of the respondents are married and only (14.2%) are unmarried
- Most (50.4%) of the respondents are from the service sector who follow food bloggers.
- People from income group above 80000 follow food blogs.
- The frequency of dining out in a restaurant once a month is quite high among the respondents which 41%
- Most (86.5%) of the respondents are aware and 13.5 % of respondents are not aware of food blogs
- Most (65.3%) of the respondents follow food blogs while selecting restaurant while 34.7% don't follow.
- Most (89.9%) of the respondents follow food blogs on Facebook and 73.4% of the respondents follow on Instagram.
- Reading food blogs is interesting for 91% of respondents.
- Most (78%) of the respondents feel that reviews and ratings of food bloggers plays big role in selecting restaurant where as 18% feels not necessary.
- Food bloggers extremely create awareness about restaurants and food served which is consider while selecting restaurants which is 90%
- Most (60%) of the respondents feels information of food blogs may be authentic where as 30% of respondents feel the is authentic.
- 80% responded feel food blog as an effective marketing tool.
- 50% of respondent's decision of selecting restaurant is based on food blogs information, reviews recommendation provided.
- Most (77.2%) of the respondents are motivated by visual content i.e the food photos, 69.6% are motivated to follow because of the comments and reviews, description of dishes motivates 46.8% respondents, 43% are motivated by number of followers of food blog, 34% of the respondents say that style and language of writing food blogs motivates them to follow food blogs, while 32.9% are motivated to follow food blogs because of the pricing of menu, 24.1% are motivated to follow because of credibility.
- 69.6% find the recommendations useful, while 40.5% enjoy. 22.8% find the recommendations satisfying and worthy while 10.1% find it feasible.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Food blogs is the review or personal thought of the blogger about the restaurant, the content is neither wrong nor right. Blogs is useful to have long term result and is helpful to create brand marque. The language and the style of writing should be catchy and flowing to attract more followers.

- Reading food blogs interest most of the people and decision of selecting restaurant is based on food blogs information, reviews recommendation provided.
- Paid reviews and recommendations should not be encouraged.
- Visual content i.e the food photos should be realistic and well clicked to give the real image of the food served at the restaurant.
- It is found that if the content reviews and comments interest the audience, he will tend to follow that food blog. It is recommended to the “Restaurant owners” to engage food bloggers to review their services, food served as an effective marketing tool to increase the business.
- Today customers do tend to follow these bloggers and the blog sites and find the information useful enjoyable while selecting the restaurants.
- The foodies/influencers should try to make these blogs more realistic with real time pictures of food, décor and other facilities available at the restaurant.
- Vlogs are the latest addition to this feature of blogging wherein the customers can get the virtual experience of all the above factors.

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