

ANALYZING INSTAGRAM CONTENTS TO UNCOVER THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS OF VALUE CREATION FOR THE MOST FAVORED FOOD PREFERENCES WITHIN GUJARAT'S CULINARY LANDSCAPE

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Abstract

Present study explores the Instagram content to uncover the intricate process of collaboration that contributes to value co-creation for the most favored food preferences within Gujarat's culinary landscape. Conceptual content analysis led to manifestation of the concept of interest from the latent one. Evaluating the number of followers, image/video posts, hashtags, likes, comments, and shares emphasizes the significance of influencer marketing, user engagement, value co-creation, and brand awareness as essential themes with regards to preferences for most favoured food dishes across various categories typically include: Fine dine, Café, Street foods, Deserts etc. This content analysis posed a research question about Video posts vs. Image posts - Which format, between videos and images generate more clicks hence drive more engagement within the realm of Instagram? Further it laid a foundation for the further study about the magnitude of user engagement and value co-creation across demographics.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Restaurant businesses, the word of mouth (WOM) has always been the way to catch the ears of hungry diners. In today's digital age, word of mouth has expanded to include online conversations. On the other side the emergence of the Internet paved a way for restaurants to transition their communication strategies from traditional methods like newspapers and brochures to digital marketing which would soon be considered a prerequisite rather than an opportunity.

Social media has revolutionized the process of gathering information from consumers, assessing product reviews, and providing product feedback. Recognizing the vital role of social media in the business world, numerous businesses are now harnessing it to engage consumers and maintain connections with their customer base.

In the contemporary social media marketing, so as the customer engagement is concerning the relationship between posts and Customer Engagement (Likes-Comments-Share-hashtags) is very important. It is the Customer Engagement which determines the popularity of the post which can greatly affect the brand communication and brand awareness. Understanding this relationship and how to take advantage of it effectively, it can make sufficient difference in the success of the social media strategy.

Consumers have shifted from being passive recipients of business marketing to actively participating in the collaborative process of value creation. Thus, in order to effectively co-create experiences, businesses must actively listen to and learn from consumers (C K Prahlad and Venkat Ramaswamy, 2009). How restaurant businesses can remain away from co-creation of experiences? To take advantage of collaborative process of value creation, restaurants are becoming insta-famous by enrolling their presence on the Instagram platform.

Instagram has become an increasingly popular method for restaurant businesses to connect with their target audiences and promote their offerings. Much like the iconic duos of Romeo and Juliet, Hennes and Mauritz (H & M), or Jack and Jill, Instagram posts and Likes-Comments-Share-hashtags are intricately linked. Thus, as an excellent tool of user interaction, Instagram offers a unique, dynamic and visually engaging platform for showcasing Presentation of Products, Brand Exposure, Customer Engagement and Consumer Insight in a fresh and appealing way. Most restaurants today are using social media, especially Instagram, to post their menu, interior photos, cooking tutorials, and especially pictures of their food dishes and in turn user actively interacts by liking, commenting, sharing and hashtags that foster the collaborative process of value creation. Thus, the posts allow the restaurant businesses to thematize the customer's test and preferences.

In COVID pandemic, there is a paradigm shift in the food habits therefore it becomes very essential to know about the consumer's choice for the type of dishes. Conversely, Gujarat is a state known for its love of diverse cuisine. Its people are always eager to explore different dishes, and if they find something they enjoy, they often become loyal customers. Gujarati individuals are true

food enthusiasts and seldom pass up the opportunity to savor meals and beverages outside their homes. Hence, this study pay focus on analyzing user engagement with restaurant Instagram posts featuring food dishes and discerning their culinary preferences through the engagement.

The present study aims to conduct Conceptual Content Analysis to determine the most preferred food dishes in post COVID scenario among the Gujarati population. Additionally, it will evaluate the effectiveness of food-related marketing endeavors on Instagram and explore whether such marketing campaigns influence customer purchasing behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, businesses are investing in differentiating their product offerings but struggle to set themselves apart. For business leaders, growth and value creation have taken precedence. The concept of value and the system of value creation are swiftly transitioning from a product/company-centric perspective to unique client experiences. Informed, interconnected, empowered, and actively engaged consumers are increasingly collaborating with companies in shaping value. The interaction between the company and the consumer has become the epicenter of value generation and extraction. As value progressively revolves around experiences, the entire market is evolving into a platform for discussions and interactions involving consumers, communities, and companies. (C K Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy, 2009). Thus, the customer engagement through collaborative process of value creation is most important in today's hyper competitive scenario.

In the restaurant industry the early form of gaining customer engagement is word of mouth (WOM). WOM communication is the key to a successful company, which means customers have the will to influence others by sharing their positive experiences without being paid for it (Lopes et al & - Rita Rueff Lopes, 2018). In present technology driven businesses, word of mouth has expanded to include online conversations for achieving widespread recognition for the restaurant often involves attaining "Insta-fame." This is because Instagram, the widely used platform for sharing photos and videos, has evolved into one of the foremost social networking platforms (Jackie Prange, 2021).

Over the past few years, the numbers of Instagram users have been on an upward trajectory, surging from 1.04 billion in 2020 to 1.21 billion in 2021. According to industry experts, the growth experienced in 2021 was particularly noteworthy for Instagram, given the escalating competition it faced from TikTok and other social media platforms in recent years. In 2022, the count of Instagram users climbed to 1.28 billion. Looking ahead, the global Instagram user base is projected to keep expanding. Projections indicate a 50 million increase in 2024, pushing the user count to 1.4 billion. By 2025, analysts anticipate a worldwide Instagram user population of 1.44 billion (oberlo.com, 2022). Instagram has a significantly higher user engagement rate compared to Facebook and Twitter; therefore, the overall, social media marketing is highly influenced by Instagram's effectiveness (Chaudhary, 2021).

Conversely, social media marketing operates in tandem with influential marketing. This strategy has been increasingly embraced by a numerous brand and is widely recognized as one of the most effective marketing techniques available today, chiefly owing to its track record of effectively influencing potential customers (Woods, 2016). Nielsen study indicates that 92% of consumers place more trust in recommendations from friends and family than in any other advertising methods (Kimberly A. Whitler, 2014). In a collaborative study conducted by Twitter and the analytics company Annalect, it was found that 56% of surveyed users place their trust in recommendations from friends, and 49% rely on influencers (Swant, 2016). Customers now increasingly rely on both peers and influencers for informed purchase decisions, making influencers critical in shaping consumer perceptions of a company's offerings (Matharu, 2022). Lou & Yuan's Partial least squares path modeling reveals that influencer-generated content, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity positively impact follower trust in influencers' branded posts, leading to increased brand awareness and purchase intent (Chen Lou and Shupeiyuan, 2019).

The narrative and reputation of restaurants are no longer solely in the hands of publicists; it's shaped by customers. In the restaurant industry, where reviews and recommendations are paramount, Reviews strongly impact purchase decisions. Positive or negative reviews can influence diners' choices regarding meals, deals, and restaurants. In fact, 94% of diners research restaurant reviews before deciding to dine out. (Jordan Ben, 2023). Even it sets a trend for culinary preferences.

In assessing customer culinary preferences, we employ the content analysis of posts on Instagram which gauges engagement through popularity and commitment. Popularity is quantified by metrics such as "likes" and correlates with brand awareness, while commitment refers to the active participation of customers on social networks and is measured by tallying user comments on posts (Fissi et al, 2022). Prior research has suggested that the level of interaction between restaurants and customers is higher on social media platforms compared to websites, particularly in the context of the pandemic (Azer et al, 2021). While previous research also highlights the importance of monitoring social media during a pandemic, there is a lack of comprehension regarding how social media users engage during a global crisis and the factors that influence their behavior.

Numerous restaurants leverage Instagram for marketing purposes, enabling them to craft visually appealing content showcasing their menus. This platform also facilitates customers in comparing different dining establishments through posted content. Furthermore, the features such as comment and like allow customers to provide feedback on individual restaurants. Moreover, consumer behavior is significantly influenced by product-related discussions, content, recommendations, mentions, and online reviews (Jorge et al, 2022). Beyond the restaurants, influential bloggers with substantial followings on Instagram are influencing

consumer purchasing decisions. Microblogs with more product disclosure and popularity boost cognitive trust that leads to higher affective trust which has stronger effects on collectivism-oriented disclosure (Zhou, 2019). In summary, influencers hold a significant sway over consumers when it comes to their food choices and preferences (Aypar Satı and Ipek Kazancoglu, 2020). They can introduce and popularize new food trends, products, and dining experiences, making them a vital component of the modern food industry's marketing and promotion strategies.

Gujarat is a state known for its residents' love of diverse culinary experiences. They actively seek out a variety of dishes to savor, and if they find something they enjoy, they often become loyal patrons of that restaurant or cafe. The present study delves into the taste preferences and food choices of individuals from Gujarat by employing conceptual content analysis. This approach provides a concise summary of a message set instead of offering a comprehensive report, with a primary focus on answering questions related to "how many" (Krippendorff, 2004). Qualitative content analysis involves presenting data in textual form and identifying themes, enabling the interpretation of the findings (Philip Burnard, 1991). The choice of content analysis impacts the required number of informants and the data collection approach (Polit and Beck, 2004).

Furthermore, it aids in pinpointing the preferred dishes among the Gujarati population and enables an evaluation of the impact of food-related marketing campaigns on Instagram in respect of customer buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is the qualitative research in nature which aims to assess people's perceptions of the top 5 dishes based on Instagram posts. Data was collected from Instagram posts between May 15, 2021, and July 15, 2021. This data includes information from official Instagram posts of food dishes, including likes, comments, followers, and shared posts. Additionally, newspaper articles and blogs served as supplementary sources of information.

Conceptual content analysis was employed to analyze and extract meaning from the substantial number of likes and comments on these food-related posts. Content analysis allows making decision between conducting either a manifest analysis or a latent analysis. The technique of a manifest analysis was employed which primarily focuses on describing what the informants explicitly state, closely adhering to the text, using the informants' own words, and highlighting the visible and evident aspects within the text (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

This method helps in distilling key concepts that reflect dish preferences and shed light on the phenomenon related to devising effective marketing strategies. Furthermore, it can reveal potential areas of concern in restaurant marketing strategies through social media platforms.

The outcomes of this study will provide valuable insights into the marketing strategies and promotional campaigns for food dishes. Prior informed consent was obtained, and privacy and confidentiality measures were strictly upheld throughout the research process.

DATA ANALYSIS

One common misconception in qualitative research is the belief that content analysis primarily involves conducting word-frequency counts, assuming that frequently mentioned words represent the most significant concerns. However, it's essential to understand that content analysis encompasses much more than simple word counting. What enriches this technique is its emphasis on deriving meaning unit, coding and categorizing the data (Stemler, 2001).

Conceptual content analysis led to manifestation of the concept of interest from the latent one. Based on the scanned literature; meaning unit, code and theme was derived as under

Table – 1: Manifestation of meaning unit, code, category and theme

Meaning Unit	Condensed Unit	Meaning	Code	Category	Theme
Traditionally, word of mouth (WOM) attracted hungry diners, but in the digital era, it also encompasses online discussions	Traditional encompasses eWOM	WOM	Collaborative Process	Online Discussion (e WoM)	Customer Engagement
The overall, social media marketing is highly influenced by Instagram's effectiveness	Instagram – Most effective Marketing tool	– Most	User Engagement Rate	Insta-Fame	Effective Communication
Social media influencers hold a significant sway over consumers when it comes to their food choices and preferences	Customers are highly influenced by Influencers	highly	Influencers Impact	Cognitive Trust	Influencer marketing

Customer engagement drives post popularity, significantly impacting brand communication and awareness.	Customer engagement Impacting the Brand communication	Brand Communication	Brand Awareness	Brand Equity
Empowered and well-informed consumers now actively collaborate with companies to co-create value	<i>Collaboration between a brand and its consumers</i>	Consumer Collaboration	Consumer Involvement	Value Co-creation

Descriptive analysis of data collected from Instagram posts between May 15, 2021, and July 15, 2021. Data consist of the total number of followers and shared posts on Top Food Instagram pages of Gujarat.

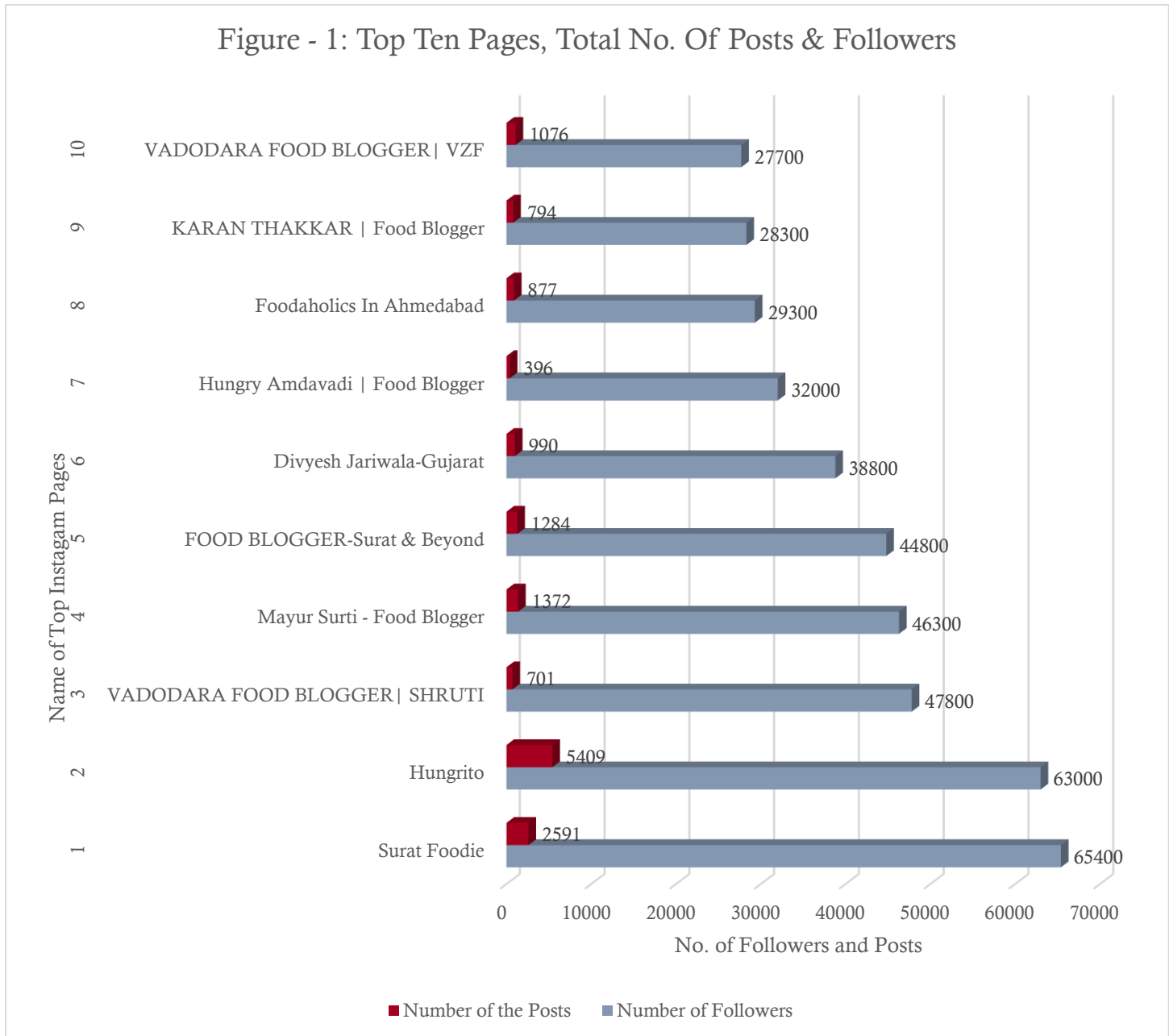


Figure – 1 illustrates the realm of Instagram's top 10 food-related pages, Surat Foodie leads with the highest number of followers at 65.4 thousand, while Vadodara Food Blogger trails with the fewest followers at 27.7 thousand. When examining post quantities, Hungrito boasts the most posts at 5409, whereas Hungry Amdavadi has the fewest at 396, despite amassing approximately 32 thousand followers. Notably, a higher post count does not necessarily equate to increased engagement. Surat

Foodie, with 2591 posts, which is nearly half of Hungrito's count (5409), manages to maintain more followers than Hungrito. Hence, the pivotal factor influencing engagement appears to be the quality of posts rather than their quantity.

Figure 2 : No of Image and Video Shared

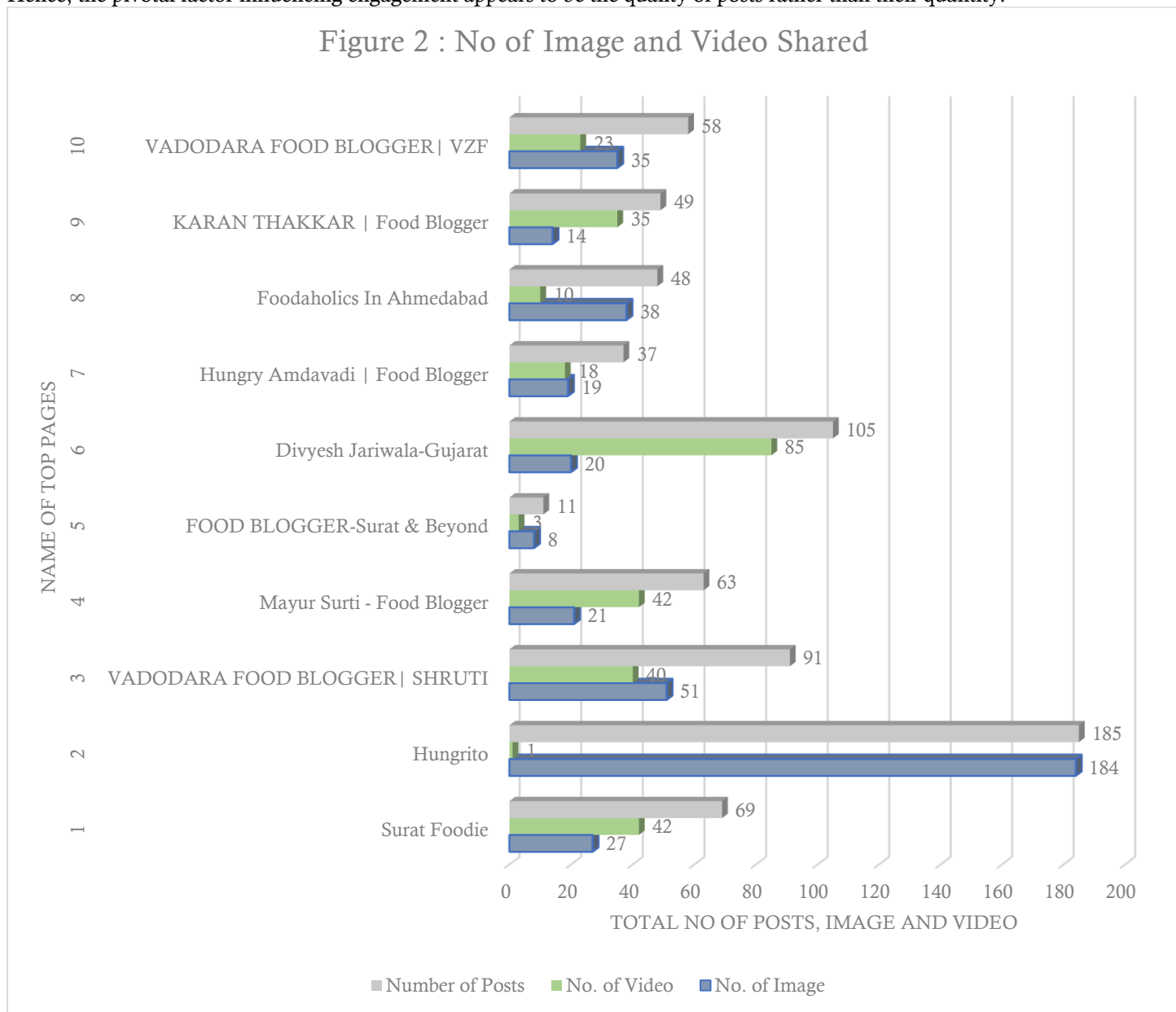


Figure 2 illustrates the proportional frequency of various formats, including photos and videos, utilized by the top food Instagram pages in Gujarat over the last three months (from May 15, 2021, to July 15, 2021). The predominant share of content is presented in image format, constituting 58.24%, whereas videos represent a smaller portion at 41.76%. Consequently, images are predominantly employed for service promotion, despite several Instagram accounts employing videos for this purpose. For instance, Divyesh Jariwala (food blogger) utilizes video content for promotion approximately 80.95% of the time.

Tim Voda conducted interviews with a total of 95 respondents, comprising 27 from the initial survey and an additional 68 for the updated one. Among them, more than two-thirds (67.55%) highlighted that video content tends to yield higher ad clicks on Facebook. Slightly over a quarter (26.47%) expressed a preference for images, while the remaining respondents (5.88%) stated that they perceive no significant difference (Woda, 2022).

Another study conducted by Fan et al indicates that in many research and practical contexts, there's a common preference for videos over images, with the belief that videos are superior in eliciting human emotions and enhancing machine intelligence. Yet, our findings indicate that this presumption doesn't consistently hold true, especially in the context of evoking emotions in human observers (Fan et al, 2020).

Thus, there is significant number of arguments and ongoing debate concerning the effectiveness of video post vs. image posts in terms of engagement. This content poses a research question about Video posts vs. Image posts - Which format, between videos and images generate more clicks hence drive more engagement on Instagram?

Retrieving the vast number of images uploaded daily on platforms like Facebook and Instagram poses significant challenges in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and visibility. Search engines typically retrieve images using text-based methods, which require images to be associated with specific keywords or textual descriptions.

In January 2011, Instagram added hashtags (Baranovic, 2013), and from April 27, 2015, users could use emojis as hashtags. Hashtags, marked with '#', describe image content, aiding search and visibility. Photo owners use emojis to link images with emotions - they're pictograms symbolizing feelings (Tsapatsoulis, 2016). Therefore, understanding user engagement rate by insta-fame it is required to analyses hashtags. Following figure indicates top hashtags used in Gujarat for food posts.

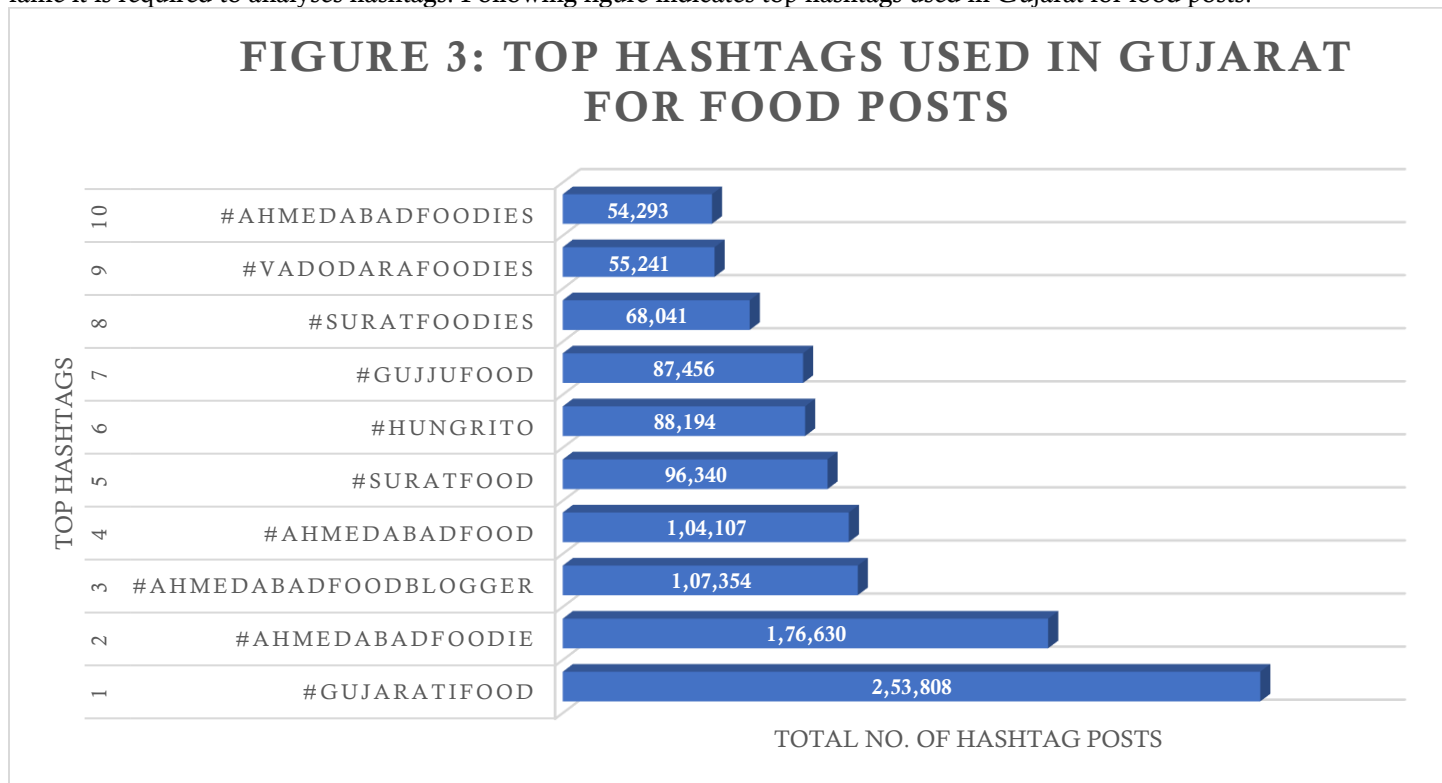


Figure 3 showcases the Top 10 food hashtags prevalent in Gujarat. Within this ranking, #gujaratifood emerges as the most popular hashtag, amassing over 253 thousand posts, while #ahmedabadfoodies ranks as the least popular, with just over 54 thousand posts associated with it. Notably, hashtags like #hungrito, which even has its dedicated Instagram page called Hungrito, are extensively utilized in food-related Instagram posts, accumulating approximately 88 thousand posts. This indicates their significant presence and usage within the culinary content shared on the platform.

This content allows to evaluate the descriptive power of chosen hashtags with respect to the corresponding images. Notably, the utilization of hashtags across social media channels amplifies impressions, fosters brand awareness, and extends the reach to a wider audience. Consequently, it allows to explore the impact and magnitude of hashtags on user engagement specifically within the realm of Instagram.

Analysis of No. of Followers, Image/Video Posts, Hashtags, Likes and Sharing highlights the user engagement, value co-creation, brand awareness, preference for top food dishes across various categories based on popular pages and trends on Instagram platform. These categories typically include: Fine dine, Café, Street foods, Deserts etc. These top food categories are often highlighted and curated by leading food pages on Instagram, showcasing diverse culinary experiences and catering to the preferences of their wide-ranging audience. Figure – 5 showcases the preferences for top food dishes by category on the bases of likes on top pages.

Table – 2: Top Food Dishes based on likes on top Pages

	Name of the Pages	Fine-Dine		Café		Street Food		Desert	
		Type of Food	Likes	Type of Food	Likes	Type of Food	Likes	Type of Food	Likes
1	Surat Foodie	Executive	122	Sandwich	382	Aloo Puri	4566	Nutella	193

		Meal	7		7			Brownie Cake	1
2	Hungrito	Dosa	2812	Cheesy Fries	3695	Cheese Mayo Vada Pav	5356	Blueberry Cheese Cake	1625
3	VADODARA FOOD BLOGGER SHRUTI	Chhole Bhature	1304	Pizza	1060	Jalebi	2667	Nankhai	657
4	Mayur Surti - Food Blogger	Gujarati Thali	1635	Chees Toast Sandwich	14065	Cheese Papdi Chaat	3525	Nutella Strawberry	1796
5	FOOD BLOGGER-Surat & Beyond			Veg. Cheese Sandwich	5646	Aloo Puri	83296	Waffle	1651
6	Divyesh Jariwala-Gujarat	Rice with Paneer Gravy	1845	Jalapeno Cheese Poppers	4975	Tandoori Damkha Momos	57852	Rabdi Mava Malai Kulfi	12852
7	Hungry Amdavadi Food Blogger	Paneer Butter Masala	3861	Pizza	6621	Sev Usal	3453	3 in 1 Cold Coco	5256
8	Foodaholics In Ahmedabad	Khoba Roti Combo Meal	580	Sandwich	595	Burger	440	Falooda	614
9	KARAN THAKKAR Food Blogger	—		Frankie	3420	Fafda	6973	Milk Shake	2857
10	VADODARA FOOD BLOGGER VZF	Pavbhaji	1418	Pizza	3391	Gathiya	2468	Milk Shake	2839
	Total No of Likes		14682		47295		170596		32078

Table 2 illustrates the preferences for various food categories determined by the users' likes on prominent food Instagram pages. Among the categories, street food gained the highest engagement with 170,596 likes. Let's summarize the category wise information on food preferences:

- Street Food: Street food gained the most engagement among the categories with 170,596 likes. Aloo Puri received 87,862 likes (83,296 + 4,566) and is the most preferred food in this category.
- Fine-Dine Category: Paneer's taste, with 6,933 likes (1,221 + 1,845 + 3,861), is preferred over all other foods in this category.
- Cafe Category: The sandwich received 24,133 likes (3,827 + 14,065 + 5,646) and is the most preferred food in this category.
- Dessert Category: The taste of milk ruled out all other food items.

This information provides a general understanding of food preferences, yet a scientific investigation into these preferences across demographic variables is necessary for a more comprehensive analysis.

CONCLUSION

Present study explores the Instagram content to uncover the intricate process of collaboration that contributes to value co-creation for the most favored food preferences within Gujarat's culinary landscape. The Culinary content on the Instagram pages allow restaurant businesses to thematize the customer's test and preferences by scrutinizing Likes, Comments, Shares and hashtags of Instagram posts. This analysis seeks to uncover the multifaceted journey and collaborative dynamics inherent in shaping the culinary landscape, shedding light on the diverse influences and interactions that impact the valued food choices in the region. Analyzing the content aided in evaluating the descriptive power of selected hashtags which enhance exposure, facilitate search, boosts visibility and in turn it raises brand awareness, and expands audience reach. This exploration allows restaurants to understand how the magnitude of hashtags affect user engagement and how it helps in value co-creation by boosting collaborative process, particularly on Instagram. Notably, the current research highlighted that a larger number of posts doesn't automatically result in increased engagement. Therefore, it seems that the crucial element influencing engagement is the quality of posts rather than their quantity. This content analysis posed a research question about Video posts vs. Image posts - Which format, between

videos and images generate more clicks hence drive more engagement within the realm of Instagram? Further it laid a foundation for the further study about the user engagement and value co-creation across demographics. Thus, the present study uncovers the important themes such as Brand Equity, Influencer Marketing, Customer Engagement and Value Co-creation that collectively elevate and shape the popular food preferences within the culinary domain of Gujarat.

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