



INFLUENCER BRANDED FOODS AND BEVERAGES – FLAVOUR OF THE SEASON

Social media has become a major platform to market and advertise products and services. This has given rise to a new set of celebrities known as „influencers.“ Today, there are influencers for every category, from fashion to fitness. The food industry also has its own set of influencers who act as brand ambassadors and help create a positive impression in the minds of potential consumers. These bloggers bring in fresh, interesting material and insights from a variety of sources and personal experiences. Food bloggers or vloggers put up recipes of famous chefs, their own personal recipes, cooking exercises, magic ingredients, dining experiences, gastronomical trips, etc. on their web page. They have a massive fan following, which gives their brand visibility and recognition. They are also a helpful resource for gathering information and sparking creativity in the food and beverage sector. A lot of food brands have already started using such bloggers as part of their marketing strategy.

THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The digital natives of today spend maximum time in the virtual world and on social media platforms. They explore their accounts of Twitter, Instagram or Facebook for advice on various things, such as travel destination, fitness plans and smart recipes. They follow individuals with expertise in a particular area and take their advice seriously. They have a trust-based relationship with their online idols and believe that the promotions done by influencers are authentic and based on personal experiences.

There are influencers with **1 –5 million followers**.

In the food industry, the influencers have the freedom to write the brand story. Brands choose the accounts that are passionate about gastronomy and presentation. Usually, organic campaigns are successful due to the influencers’ marketing style. The brands limit themselves to briefing and leave the storytelling to the influencers.



TYPES OF INFLUENCERS

- 1. Foodie Macro-influencers:** Food brands could choose macro-influencers such as chefs and food critics. Their popularity allows the brand to reach a wide audience globally. However, these influencers are expensive. Macro-influencers are relevant for restaurant chains with multiple outlets across cities.
- 2. Foodie Micro-influencers:** Food brands could connect with micro-influencers such as home chefs or passionate cooks. They have a smaller yet extremely targeted following. Micro-influencers have been known to boost sales.
- 3. Miscellaneous Micro-influencers:** Food brands also share their brand through influencers who talk about art, entertainment or travel. Food brands can campaign with beauty bloggers or daredevils to create an interesting campaign story.

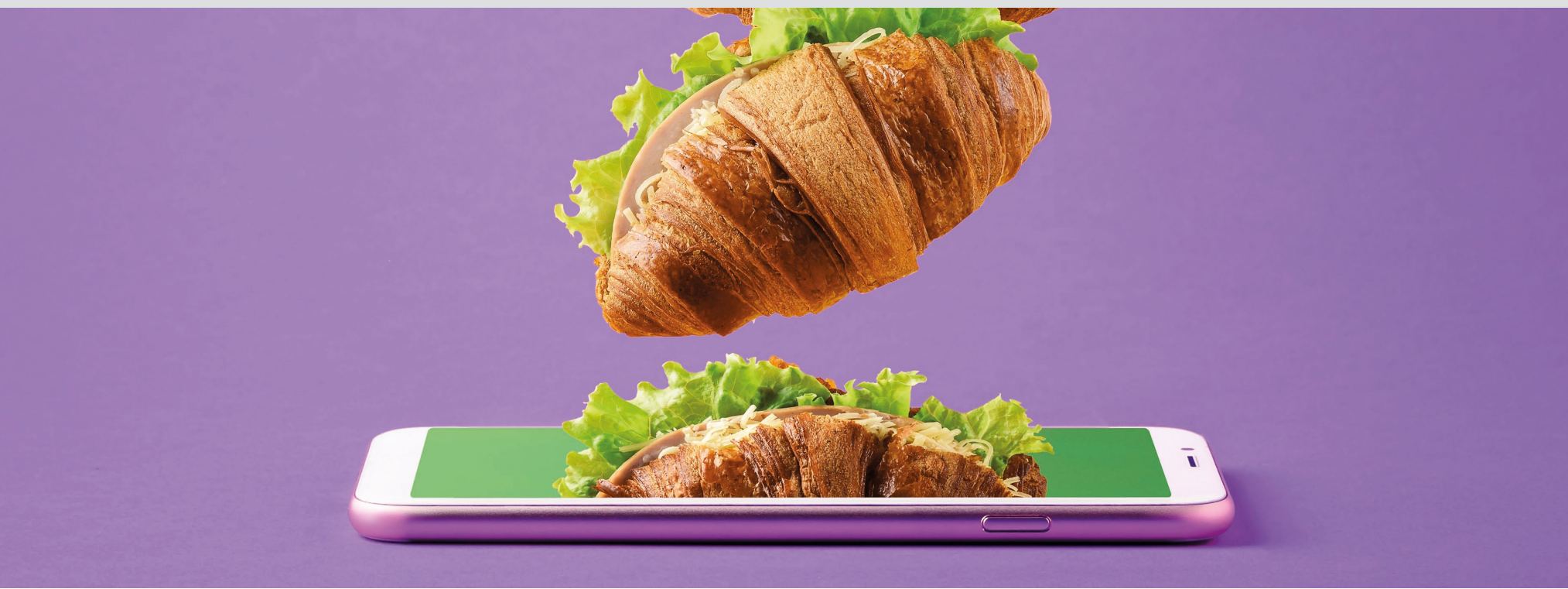


INFLUENCER-MARKETED PRODUCTS AND RECIPES

Some of the success stories are:

- 1. Baileys and Cook Republic:** The food blogging page Cook Republic (based in Australia) helped in the successful launch of Bailey’s Chocolat Luxe through the product Bailey’s Salted Dark Chocolate Panna Cotta. The beautifully done post with interesting accompanying posts garnered over 7,200 likes on Instagram, some 3,000 more than the other posts on the page.
- 2. Green Leaf Matcha and The Little Plantation:** The food blogging site ‘The Little Plantation’ is based in the UK and focuses on vegan food. Hence, it was the perfect launchpad for Green Leaf Matcha’s Vegan Coconut Panna Cotta, which is an organic, vegan, and rich-in-antioxidant dessert option. It became a big hit with the health-conscious audience and raked in 6,000 likes on Instagram.
- 3. Almond Breeze and Love & Lemons:** Almond Breeze’s almond milk and cashew milk got a makeover as the food blogging site Love & Lemons (based in Texas) introduced them as salad dressings. The sponsored recipe gained over 2,600 likes on Instagram and had a host of comments taking note of the recipe.
- 4. In the Raw and Gunnysack:** US-based „The Gunny Sack“ released a recipe for a mouth-watering fall treat just in time for Thanksgiving with the product „Agave In the Raw.“ In this campaign, the brand (In the Raw) and the blogger made the ideal team. Both appeal to the tribe that yearns for tastier, more straightforward, family-friendly meals, especially on the most decadent of eating occasions—the holidays. The campaign was therefore extremely successful, especially on Pinterest, where it was repinned to approximately 47,000 boards.
- 5. Alice and Wonderlab:** China-based brand Wonderlab collaborated with snack endorser and blogger Alice for an innovative promotion of its meal replacement drink. Alice collected and shared the 9 favourite tastes of her followers, and Wonderlab created the flavours, offering them to her followers at a special discount. During the promotion period, Alice also talked about her personal experience with the brand. This helped the brand increase awareness regarding their brand.

As per research, influencer marketing in the food industry garners an engagement rate of 7.38%. Furthermore, the more shares, likes and comments a post gets, the more is the return on investment. By forming a bond with social media audience, the restaurant and food industry earns USD 6.50 for each dollar spent on such initiatives.



HOW FOOD BRANDS USE INFLUENCER MARKETING:

- 1. Sponsored posts:** Sponsored posts are a great way for brands to penetrate the market. Brands contact the correct influencers and allow them to take the lead and create a memorable campaign.
- 2. Ambassadors:** Food brands that want a long-term association with the influencer can do an ambassador program. The chosen influencer enters into an agreement with the brand and his or her social platform will feature the brand regularly through pictures, product reviews, promotions and giveaways.
- 3. Reviews:** The food brands can give free product samples and request influencers to review them on their social media channels.
- 4. Connect with a movement:** Food brands and influencers can get together and make a new hashtag with themes like healthy diet, historical cuisines, secret recipes, etc. This usually helps in rapid social media growth by driving traffic to the brand’s website and towards its products.

CONCLUSION

Food is an integral and essential part of every individual’s life. For those who like to cook, it is a passion. Hence, food bloggers are popular and have a huge following. Food and beverage companies are yet to understand the full potential of this new marketing vehicle. Through food bloggers, they can achieve wider reach, better targeting, and greater brand visibility. It is also much more cost-effective than the traditional marketing forms. Food blogging continues to grow around the globe, and with online communities increasing every day, it has a bright future.