

**THE INFLUENCE OF FOOD AESTHETICS ON CONSUMER  
PERCEPTION AND INTENTION TO PURCHASE FOOD IN NAIROBI**

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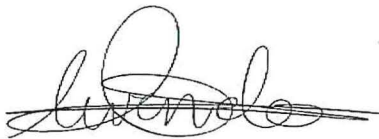
**FEBRUARY 2022**

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the research proposal/project contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the research project itself.

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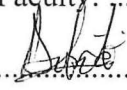
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## ABSTRACT

The saying, "The eyes eat before the mouth" indicated that there is a strong correlation between food presentation and its visual appeal, as the consumer initially tastes food with their eyes. Human beings have exhibited an affinity for aesthetically pleasing meals, and some are even prepared to pay a premium for them, as they believe a well-plated meal to be an excellent tasting meal. As such, the goal of this study was to deepen the understanding of the influence of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intent to purchase food in Nairobi, Kenya. The study examined the techniques used in food styling, the relationship between food aesthetics and consumer perception, the factors that influence consumer perception, the types of media used to share food content on social media, the factors that influence consumer purchase intention, and the factors that influence consumer purchase decisions. The AISDALSLove model and the theory of planned behavior served as the theories for this investigation. The analysis was conducted on 170 food enthusiasts in Kenya who have social media accounts. The selection method was the non-probability sampling, with respondents picked based on their interest in food, restaurant visits, and social media activity. Both the descriptive and quantitative research approaches were used, and data was gathered via questionnaires distributed to individual respondents. The findings showed that the respondents all indicated that they value food aesthetics and that it influences their restaurant choices. Social media has helped by allowing foodies to capture their food aesthetic, taste, and ambiance experiences. With the ability to post feedback, social media has forced eateries to offer exactly what they promote online and offline.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The first thing someone is likely to say when a plate of food is presented in front of them is, “Wow! That looks good.” Or “That does not look too good.” The Middle Eastern people have a popular saying that goes, “The eye eats before the mouth.” This saying emphasizes the significance of food presentation and its appeal to the eye as the consumer will first taste food with the eyes (Imram, 1999). Hence, this paper is fundamentally focused on how the sense of sight influences consumer perception with reference to food aesthetics and how advertisements influence consumer perception. Consumer perception influences decision making and, as a result, it is a part of consumer behaviour (Belch & Belch, 2009). Consumer perception happens when the consumer leans on their personal experiences, beliefs, expectations, and needs. It is essential that those internal sources of motivation are satisfied by taking action that will allow for satisfaction to be met. The needs tend to be finite; however, wants that stem from desire know no bounds Solomon et al. (2006).

The meaning behind “the eye eats before the mouth” is that human beings prefer to eat food that is attractive to them; an aesthetically pleasing plate is achieved through food styling. According to the Collins English Dictionary, (2010) aesthetics is “the study of the rules and principles of art, beauty and psychological responses to it.” This applies to food aesthetics as it is the art of giving food an appealing and pleasing appearance. A neat plate could be perceived differently to a messy plate, as a result, consumers can form positive or negative opinions based on what they have perceived on the plate. Equally, food styling is a form of art and food is the medium (Vivaldo & Flannigan, 2010). It is the practice of putting together food and other elements that will bring about a coherent and balanced picture that will tell an accurate story about the food, as well as make it look attractive, tasty, and fresh (Carafoli, 2003). A successful food stylist helps to create a photograph that will sell a dream connected to a brand, restaurant, lifestyle, chef, product, among others (Vivaldo & Flannigan, 2010).

The emergence of food aesthetics and food styling first started in the 1930s when large companies employed home economists to test and develop recipes for their kitchen appliances and new food products (Carafoli, 2003). Because there was no one else to do it, the home economists metamorphosed into food stylists when their employers required them to create photogenic food for their food advertisements that will be presented on print media.

Food styling and food photography in the 1930s was extremely new to the advertising industry; as a result, the photographs in the advertisements were cluttered with props that were added using little to no logic. The photographer who, equally, did not know how to photograph food would either over light or under light the photography scene. According to (Vivaldo & Flannigan, 2010), the incompatible use and overuse of props and bad lighting was a consistent theme in all food advertisements from the 1930s to the 1980s. For instance, the food stylists would decorate roast beef on a platter with rubber duckies and fake grass; they also added toys and shiny CDs to the mix. However, in the early 1990s the food stylists' and photographers' tastes became more refined; props, lighting and composition improved as consumers demanded for more lavish, entertaining, and most importantly, food centric advertisements.

The 2000s brought with it the digital media revolution. In the early 90s, food photography was seen on newspapers, cookbooks, magazines, and other types of print media, which is what is now known as traditional media advertising, Kim et al. (2009). Traditional media advertising are advertisements that occur in the traditional types of media such as radio, billboards, magazines, newspapers, and television (Saxena, 2021) . Communication on traditional media is fully controlled by marketers and they will always aim to positively present their brand. Hence, they will always share positive communication about their brand (Tarabieh, 2017). So, when a traditional media advertisement is aired, the target audience can only watch, listen, or read. Traditional media advertising tends to be one sided, where the target audience do not interact with the advertisements they cannot comment, reply to, like or share the advertisement. As a result, traditional media advertising will positively influence consumer perception as they are only receiving positive communication about the brand (Tarabieh, 2017) . For instance, a food brand will contract a food stylist and food photographer to create a picture of a delicious burger that will be used as an advertisement on a magazine. The target audience is likely to have a positive reaction to that advertisement because of the positive communication made by the food brand. However, they will not be able to share their experience with the burger because of the advertisement.

On the other hand, because of digitalization, social media advertising has become a necessity to bring about brand awareness. Social media advertising is advertising on social networking websites (Saxena, 2021) . Books and magazines have been replaced with screens as the preferred medium to share advertisements. Advertisements are now being seen on blogs, websites, social media, digital billboards, live streaming, and other forms of digital media

(Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2019). Unlike traditional media advertising, social media websites make it possible for their users to share personal experiences, which includes experiences with brands. This has forced brands to be more truthful with their online communication as the interactive nature of social media allows consumers to call out deceitful communication that brands get away with while using traditional media advertising (Hensel & Deis, 2010).

Furthermore, the internet has made it easier for consumers to conduct information research; they can go online and check out reviews done by other consumers. E-word-of-mouth, a powerful form of advertising, which is produced through social media helps consumers form perceptions and influences purchase decisions through mutual communications that lead to them influencing one another Sweeney et al. (2008). For instance, like the previous example, a food brand will contract a food stylist and food photographer to create a picture of a delicious burger that will be used as an advertisement on a social media platform. The target audience is likely to first have a positive reaction to that advertisement because of the positive communication made by the food brand. But they will also conduct information searches online to check out other people's experiences, they will interact with the advertisement by liking, sharing, or commenting on it, they will also be able to reply to the advertisement with their own experience. So, if they had an experience opposite to the communication done on the advertisement, they will instantly be able to communicate that online.

According to Facebook (2019), food and drink carries 43% of the top global interests on Instagram. Instagram is in the business of aesthetics and with the development of food bloggers, enthusiasts and critics, food styling has become a concept that restaurants must consider. As stated by a study carried out in the UK, 45% of consumers say that a beautifully presented meal is worth sharing on social media (Zegler, 2020) . In Nairobi, new and upcoming restaurants like Honey & Dough, Inti Nikkei, Nairobi Street Kitchen, Mercado, Atë, to mention a few, are using social media as their main promotional tool (Oyoo, 2016). They promote their meals by sharing photographs of beautifully styled plates of food, providing a detailed description of the meal in the picture and include an invitation to visit the restaurant or request for a delivery. Consequently, their followers engage with the posts, resulting in most of the comments on these posts to be, "Looks delicious", "Let's go" and "Wow! I want this! How much?" (Instagram , 2021). These restaurants understand that eating starts as a sensory experience, and it first engages our sense of sight – it is the visualization of appetizing food that triggers production of saliva (G.MacFarlane, 2018) . Therefore, they

contract talented food stylists and food photographers to create beautiful food pictures that they share on social media to attract their followers and persuade them into buying.

However, consumers do not always get what they see. Some of the restaurants in Nairobi have disappointed their customers by serving food contrary to the images they post on their social media accounts. According to Cai & Chi (2021), consumers suffer from dissonance which results in broken trust, as the delicious looking food that they see on the social media posts do not translate to reality; the risk of unseasoned, tasteless but beautiful food has become an issue for consumers to worry about. This is where food reviews come in; social media has created a space where anyone can share their opinion about anything (Saxena, 2021). Satisfied and unsatisfied customers alike, have taken to social media to air their views. The mistrust of restaurants in Nairobi has run so deep that potential customers, after looking at the beautiful photos, must check the reviews of restaurants before they can commit to visiting. Therefore, this research paper is geared to find out if food aesthetics influence consumer perception and intention to purchase or if food reviews and other factors hold more weight.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The Middle Eastern quote, “the eye eats before the mouth”, emphasizes that human beings prefer to interact with food that appears attractive to them. It also alludes to the fact that digestion may begin at the mouth, but it is the visualization of beautiful food that triggers production of saliva (G.MacFarlane, 2018). With this understanding food companies and restaurants strive to present aesthetically pleasing food to their customers. Since the 1930s, food aesthetics has been used to sell advertisements for food brands and restaurants that they would place on print. Food brands took advantage of traditional media advertising by employing the talents of food stylists and photographers who would create extremely delicious looking food pictures for their advertisements (Carafoli, 2003). Restaurants, especially, would get away with selling a dream and serving a nightmare by serving meals that look nothing like the advertised meal. Because of the one-sided nature of traditional media, consumers were not able to air their views or even comment on the food advertisements (Cai & Chi, 2021).

However, due to digitalization, social media has provided platforms where food companies and their consumers can have conversations; customers can use social media to talk about their dining experiences (Saxena, 2021). Therefore, food companies, food stylists and

photographers are compelled to create aesthetically pleasing pictures that portray the reality at the same time (Vivaldo & Flannigan, 2010). Even though the food in the pictures matches the food served, customers still find themselves exposed to seasonless food. This drives them to search for honest opinions from people that have previously visited the restaurants before they can visit themselves.

It is clear to see that food aesthetics in advertising has the potential to influence consumer perception; and if it does, to what extent? And are there consequences to food marketing strategies? As a result of this knowledge gap, this study will conduct a comparative study on the influence of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intention to purchase food. The study's findings will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and influence strategy adjustments in the food industry.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The general objective of this research is to study food aesthetics in advertisements on both traditional and social media and whether they influence consumer perception of food, and intention to buy food in Nairobi.

#### **1.3.1 Specific Objectives**

- i. To identify types of content in food advertisements, on social media, that attract and capture audience's attention in Nairobi.
- ii. To investigate whether visuals of aesthetically pleasing food affect consumer perception.
- iii. To investigate whether visuals of aesthetically pleasing food affect purchase intent.
- iv. To investigate whether consumers make purchase decisions based on food reviews done on social media.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study will be guided by the following research questions

- i. What types of media in food advertisements, on social media, attract and capture audience's attention in Nairobi?
- ii. Do visuals of aesthetically pleasing food influence consumer perception?
- iii. Do visuals of aesthetically pleasing food influence purchase intent?
- iv. Do consumers make purchase decisions based on food reviews done on social media?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the influence of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intention to buy food in Nairobi. Food aesthetics in advertising plays a significant role in consumer perception and decision making. Through food aesthetics, consumers can identify which foods they would like to buy and food brands they want to associate themselves with based on their aesthetics. Similarly, this study seeks to investigate the types of food content that attracts and captures the attention of audiences in Nairobi and the influence that content has on consumer perception and intent to purchase. From this, study food companies will be able to identify factors in food aesthetics that play an important role in attracting an audience, as well as strategies on how to make their food taste as good as it looks and look as good as it tastes. This study will also provide an insight on what consumers are looking for in food aesthetics. Therefore, they will be able to improve on areas that they are lacking.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The general purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intention to purchase food in Nairobi. Therefore, the physical scope of this research is in Nairobi, Kenya. This study will investigate new and upcoming restaurants in Nairobi that are using social media as their main promotional tool. This research will focus on the following restaurants: Honey & Dough, Nairobi Street Kitchen, Barista & Co., Ate, Bar Next Door and Spasso. The above restaurants form the geographical scope of study for this research.

The contextual scope of this study is to determine how restaurants use visuals to attract and capture the attention of their target audiences. There are many ways to attract audiences in the food industry, therefore this research will focus on food trends, types of content i.e., images, videos, and GIFs. Furthermore, there will be focus on factors that influence consumer decision making in picking a restaurant.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

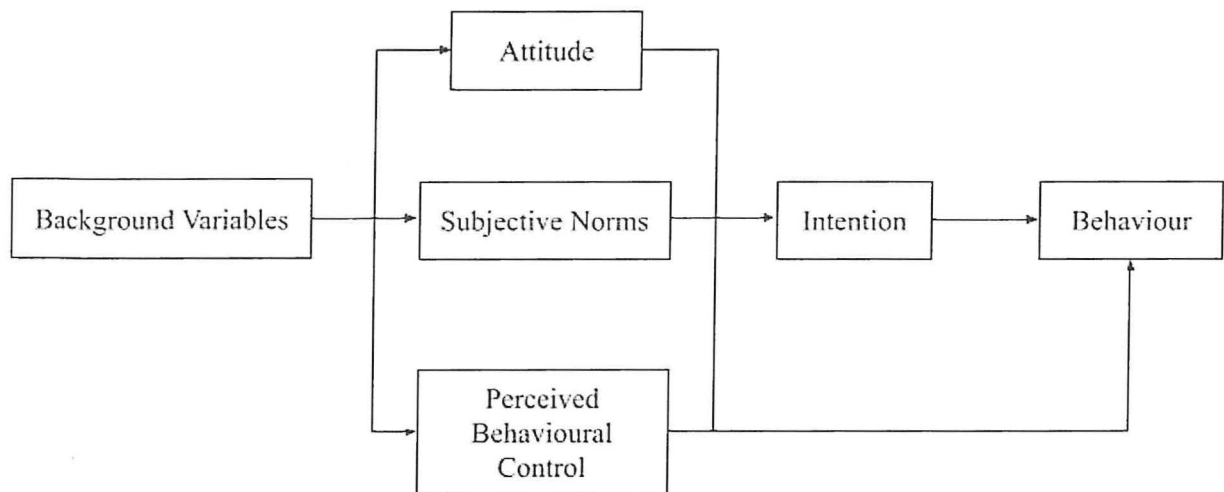
This chapter will review earlier works of literature about food aesthetics and its effect on consumer perception and intention to purchase. This study will narrow down to the types of food visuals that restaurants use to attract audiences and consumer decision making processes. A study on the concepts of food aesthetics and food styling will be carried out in this chapter and will be helpful in clarifying what visuals consumers respond to. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on various theories anchoring the study. This chapter will also focus on empirical review of relevant and related studies based on research objectives stated in chapter one, the summary of knowledge gaps, conceptual framework supporting the research and finally the summary of the studies.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical framework is the structure that supports a theory of a research study. It introduces the theory, describes, and explains why the research problem that is under study, exists. The theoretical framework comprises of an empirical theory, specific theory and conceptual framework cornering that theory. (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2016) . This study is founded on the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planning behaviour and the Hierarchy of Effects Model. A detailed discussion of the individual theories is presented next.

##### **2.1.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour**

According to the theory of planned behaviour, an individual's decision to engage in or abstain from a certain action can be reliant on their intention to engage in that conduct Ajzen et al. (2012). Furthermore, the theory of planned behaviour states that the intention to demonstrate a certain behaviour is determined by the attitude of the individual, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioural control. The attitude is an individual's belief about whether a particular behaviour or conduct contributes positively or negatively to his or her life. The subjective norm construct is centred on the individual. That is, their cultural norms, social networks, and group beliefs. Lastly, the perceived behavioural control relates to a person's perception of how simple or difficult it is to exhibit a particular behaviour or act in a particular manner.



**Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behaviour**

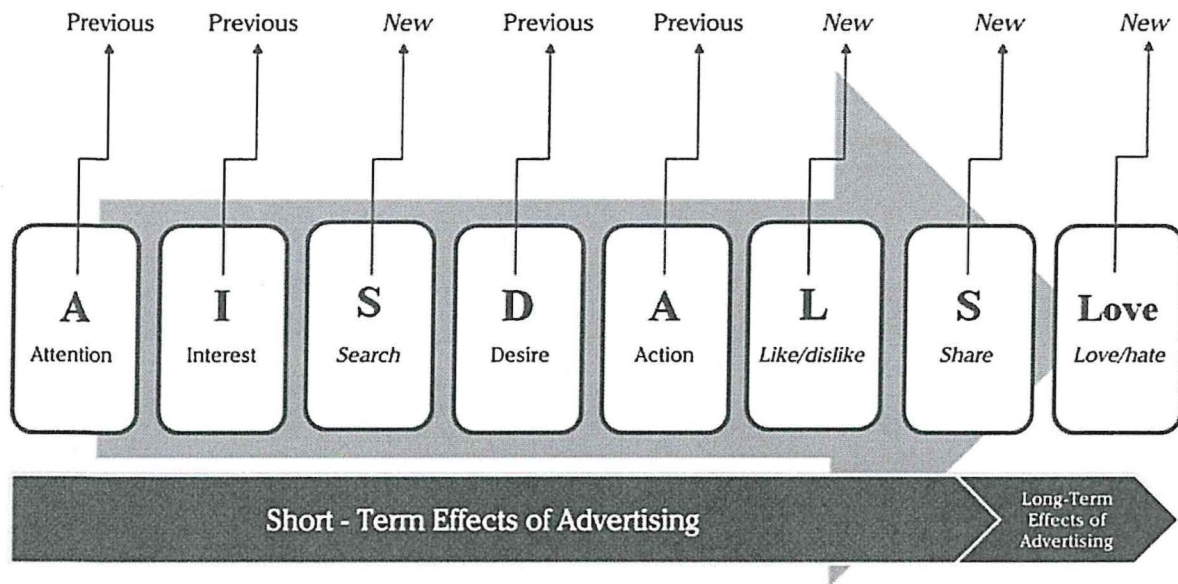
**Source: (Ajzen et al. (2021))**

This theory predicts that if a person has a favourable attitude toward an act or behaviour, is surrounded by favourable social norms, and has a high level of perceived behavioural control, these are the best predictors of the formation of a behavioural intention and, consequently, of the person displaying the act or behaviour. Bakti et al. (2020) did a study to examine the effect of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on the purchase intention of young consumers for functional foods. A survey of 123 university students in Indonesia was undertaken. The findings indicated that attitudes and subjective norms have an effect on young consumers' purchasing intentions for functional foods. Perceived behavioral control, on the other hand, has no discernible effect on repurchase intention. Alam et al. (2020) adopts a similar position in their research that was aimed at determining the factors that influence consumers' behaviour and intention to purchase sustainable food. They found that subjective norms and attitude have a positive relationship with sustainable food. In contrary with the study that Bakti et al. (2020) did, Alam et al. (2020) found that perceived behavioural control also has a positive relationship with sustainable food consumption.

### **2.1.2 AISDALSLove Model**

The hierarchy of effects approach was intended to help customers overcome their psychological apprehension of advertisements. The hierarchy of effects model is predicated on the premise that individuals first learn something through advertising, then develop feelings about the product, and ultimately act, Rehman et al. (2014). In a step-by-step fashion,

the hierarchy of effects model is used to determine the effectiveness of advertising. This process begins with product awareness and concludes with a product purchase. AISDALSLove (short for Attention, Interest, Search, Desire, Action, Like/dislike, Share, and Love/hate) is an advertising hierarchy of effects model modified from AIDA's hierarchy of effects model (Wijaya, 2012).



**Figure 2: AISDALSLove Model**

**Source: (Wijaya, 2012)**

AIDA's hierarchy of effects model has been utilized by many researchers to evaluate the influence of an advertisement. For purposes of this research paper, the AISDALSLove version of the hierarchy of effects model will be used to determine the influence of food aesthetics on consumer behaviour and purchase intention. This is due to the way information and technology has transformed the way people communicate and socialize. People are using social media more than ever to discuss their experiences, and as a result, this paper must account for the fact that people are now searching for and sharing information not only to each other personally, but through the internet.

Chen and Lobo (2012) investigated the factors influencing consumers' willingness to purchase organic food goods in urban China. The hierarchy of effects model was one of the conceptual models they employed. They discovered that customers' ideas and attitudes toward organic food purchases influenced pre-purchase appraisal, which had an effect on existing and potential consumers' behavioral intentions. The consumers employed the AISDALSLove model which impacted the views and attitudes, especially when they

searched for information on the internet and read other people's experiences. Additionally, Shafira, (2020), used the AISDALSLove theory to determine whether watching food videos created by well-known companies influenced viewers' purchasing decisions. Three of the research informants purchased as a result of seeing a popular vlogger. The remaining five research informants expressed an interest in purchasing the cuisine offered by the YouTuber at a later date. Furthermore, Huynh (2020) who investigated which advertising communications models that a company can employ in order to build an effective advertising company discovered that the AISDALSLove model is an effective way to assist company X in developing advertising campaigns that capture consumer attention, generate interest, increase desire, motivate action, increase customer satisfaction, share experience, and ultimately build brand feeling.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

This section presents the empirical review of this research. It reviews literature on promoting food brands, on social media, that attract and capture audience's attention, benefits of aesthetically pleasing food and factors influencing consumer purchase decisions.

### **2.2.1 Types of media used on social media**

Social media has also brought about the concept of e-word-of-mouth. According to Martensen & Mouritsen (2016), electronic word of mouth is defined as an informal exchange of information between consumers, on the internet, concerning evaluations of goods and services of firms. It can be circulated on blogs, social media networks, and review websites. A study did by Azzam & Waleed, (2020) showed that e-word-of-mouth has a positive effect on consumer purchase decisions as the sharing of information from one consumer to the other, was observed to be more compelling and could shape opinions. Therefore, implying that through e-word-of-mouth, a positive experience has the power of changing the consumer perception towards a certain product and a negative experience can also wreck consumer perception. Moreover, social media is defined as channels based on the internet that allows for real time one on one interactions among users. It also allows for users to interact with a large audience, all over the world, that perceives value from user-generated content (Carr & Hayes, 2014) . User Generated Content (UGC) is how users use social media to share experiences, stories, opinions, and ideas. Examples of user generated content are blogs, vlogs, GIFs, short videos, photos, and ephemeral stories. This is the content that users create and share publicly with people that they are connected to online (Wyrwoll, 2014).

### 2.2.1.1 Blogs

Blogs are media impressions that are created by social media and internet users. The content on blogs is characteristically personal to the user that owns the blog and is informed by significant experiences and ideas. This content is shared online for easy accessibility by other users of the same interests and experiences (Rettberg, 2014). Blogging is a convenient and popular way to distribute information, share opinions, report news, and share personal experiences Agarwal et al. (2012). The blogger can choose to specialize in a certain topic of interest. For instance, they can focus on fashion, food, lifestyle, travel, or a mix of all. A blog is an example of a user generated content that provides consumers with insights from the blogger and access to e-word-of-mouth.

A food blog is a blog that is focused on food; it is used to share restaurant reviews, recipes, food ethics and the aesthetic components of food such as food styling and photography (Lofgren, 2013). For purposes of this research a food blog is where concerns on food aesthetics, food styling, food photography and restaurant reviews and recommendations are discussed (Lewis, 2018). Food bloggers not only express their thoughts on their blogs, but they also use social networks like Instagram to direct traffic to their blogs; they do this by posting beautiful pictures of their food escapades Freberg et al. (2011). Overtime, food blogs and foodie Instagram accounts have grown into catalogues where people of similar interest can view delicious food pictures, restaurant reviews, recommendations, and authentic food experiences based off the opinion of the blogger. It is what helps people make decisions on what restaurant to visit and what food to try as, because of the food blog, they are fully aware of what to expect.

The study did by Azzam & Waleed (2020) aimed to examine the impact of food bloggers toward consumer's attitude and behavior in restaurant selection in Cairo, Egypt. They researched 255 Egyptians. The results showed that food bloggers' recommendations influence consumer's choices. The factors that influence this is the visual content on the blog, style of writing, the blogger's experience and usage of the internet. Similarly, Serman & Sims, (2020) found that trust, blogger's prior experience and credibility of the blogger are similar and in addition they discovered that social attractiveness and subjective norms influence the intentions of consumers to embrace recommendations from food bloggers.

So, what implications does that have on restaurants? A study conducted by Syahbani & Widodo, (2017) endeavored to research the relationship between restaurant promotion

through food bloggers and purchase intention of 400 college students in Indonesia. The results demonstrated that there was a relationship between food blogger recommendations and purchase intention of consumers. Restaurants that used food bloggers to promote their products saw an increase in sales. The factors affecting this relationship are as follows: context, collaboration, communication and connection between the blogger and the consumers.

Therefore, these studies have observed that food bloggers indeed have an influence on consumer purchase behaviour. The factors that affect blogger's influence on consumer behaviour are as follows: visual content on the blog, subjective norms, credibility of the blogger, social attractiveness, blogger's experience and prior experience. Additionally, restaurants are increasing their sales by partnering with food bloggers. This shows that the greatest influence on consumer behaviour and purchase decisions, are not professional restauranteers and restaurants, but are the members of the same social community that visit those restaurants and are vocal about their experiences.

#### **2.2.1.2 Vlogs**

A video blog, popularly known as “vlog” are web logs that consist of video clips and are shared on video sharing platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. Vlogs are a user generated content where the user shares consistent storytelling, instructional videos, travel updates, daily, monthly, and annual updates. Vlogs are primarily video based; however, some may contain a mix of written and video commentary (Princhankol & Thamwipat, 2020). A vlog is a long form video and can reach lengths of up to 1 hour. Vlogs gained popularity in 2007 on YouTube, which is the largest video content sharing platform (Kim D. , 2017). YouTubers continue to use vlogs to give their viewers a glimpse into their personal lives and experiences; they do this by speaking into the camera in a monologue fashion. There is an array of styles that a vlog can take, vlogs can be about a certain category of interest, such a fashion vlog or it could take a “day in the life” style where the vlogger shows their viewers how they spend their day, showcase encounters with people, restaurants they visited, meals they ate and items they bought; the point of a vlog is for the viewers to feel a personal connection with the vlogger (Snelson, 2015).

For purposes of this research, the focus on vlogs will be to showcase food experiences of consumers at restaurants and food content done by restaurants. A food vlog is a video blog that solely discusses the food experience (Razak & Zulkifly, 2020). Therefore, topics of

discussion in a food vlog are food recipes, food aesthetics, food styling and restaurant experiences. Food vloggers also highlight details such as price, location of the restaurant, cuisine type and taste. One of the benefits of vlogs is that the vlogger can build a community of loyal viewers (Koval, 2020). This is brought about by the raw, uncut, and unedited nature of vlogs which results in increased trust of the viewers. Famous vloggers tend to have a loyal following because their viewers trust their opinions, and recommendations, as the vloggers try to be as candid as possible.

Pandey et al. (2020) carried out research that was aimed at studying the impact of food vlogging on the consumer and they researched 232 respondents in the city of Bilaspur, India. The results demonstrated that consumers trust food vloggers to bring awareness on upcoming restaurants, quality of food and maintained standards by the restaurant owners. However, 20% of the respondents do their own research and do a further search for other restaurant reviews before they make their final decision. Equally, Briliana et al. (2020) found that there is a strong positive effect of the influence of food vlogger's recommendations on purchase decisions on millennials. The researchers stated that the rating, recommendations and perceived benefits offered by food vloggers are a great influence to purchase decisions.

So, what implications does the positive influence of food vloggers have on marketing for restaurants? A study was done by (Anh, 2021) to examine the factors that influence of food vloggers on consumer attitudes facing the restaurants that have been reviewed by food vloggers. The results showed that the factors that affect the influence of food vloggers on consumer attitudes facing intention to visit restaurants are as follows: entertainment, vividness and informativeness from the food vloggers. More importantly, the implications on restaurants were that restaurants could partner with food vloggers as an alternative to advertising.

Consequently, the above studies have shown that vlogs and vloggers have a positive influence on consumer's intention to visit and purchase from restaurants. Some of the factors that affect the influence of food vloggers are: entertainment, vividness and informativeness from the food vloggers. Similarly, restaurants are including collaborating with vloggers to their marketing strategies in order to make more sales.

### **2.2.1.3 Ephemeral Stories**

An ephemeral story communication platform is where users can share content that are temporarily exhibited on the social networks. To put it in another way, the shared content has

an exhibition deadline on the social platforms, and once the deadline is reached the stories will disappear and the platform will not store them by default, Xu et al. (2016). Social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp have adopted ephemeral stories, that are accessible only for 24 hours, into their offerings. Ephemeral stories encourage social media users to continuously interact with each other and share fun visuals, fleeting moments daily life updates and fast news, Cavalcanti et al. (2017). More importantly, social media users use ephemeral stories to share their restaurant reviews, food experiences and recipes. Because of the fleeting nature of ephemeral stories, users feel free to share a more open and less curated version of their lives, therefore, they tend to be more candid in sharing their food and restaurant experiences as well as tagging the businesses they visited.

For investigation purposes, the focus on ephemeral stories will be on the part they play in sharing food and restaurant experiences by social media users, and the main platform of the stories will be on Instagram – Instagram stories. A study was conducted by Stoitzner, (2020) that was aimed at researching the effect of the different types of online food reviews on Instagram, with regards to the users' choice of a restaurant and purchase intention, among 316 respondents in Lisbon. The results showed that the showcasing of service quality, restaurant ambience, food quality and aesthetics via Instagram stories has a major and positive effect on customer perceived value, trust and thus purchase intention. Likewise, Hendrayati & Puspita, (2020) found that reviews from food bloggers via Instagram stories have a weighty impact on consumer purchase decisions towards food brands and restaurants. What implications would food reviews done on Instagram stories have on restaurants? Amini et al. (2021) found that the best strategy for development of the restaurant is to use of the strength and opportunity (SO) which included collaborating with food blogger to promote their restaurants through the use of Instagram stories, where they can share with their followers their experiences and get fast engagement.

#### **2.2.1.4 Food Images**

According to (Leon, 2017) images are described as a presentation of something or a resemblance of something generated by a lens. Symbols inside an image are presented in a variety of ways, depending on the artist's approach. And, similar to food stylists, each would have their own sense of style. Food photos are artistic and aesthetically pleasing presentations of food and other products created and exhibited by a food stylist (Young, 2016). Food images are critical in establishing food as a contemporary, fashionable component of modern living.

Destriana et al. (2020) sought to study 'foodstagramming', on Instagram, and the effect that has on people's interest to consume food that has been shared through instragam images. Foodstagramming is the process of documenting food activities and experiences, before eating, for the purpose of uploading the food images on social media. The results showed that social media images inform the curiosity of its users and beautiful pictures of food on instagram encourage intruiged users to visit the restaurants that have been 'foodstagrammed' by other users. Similarly, Michel et al. (2014) showed food images to 60 participants. They found that that the food presented in an art-inspired manner was perceived as more artistic and loved than the food presented in the non art-inspired manner. Furthermore, participants were willing to pay a premium for food that had a more appealing plating. These findings are consistent with the notion that presenting food in an aesthetically pleasant manner might enhance the dining experience.

### **2.2.2 Factors influencing consumer perception.**

Perception is how individuals choose, organize, and interpret sensations, which is the immediate reaction of sensory receptors (such as the fingers, eyes, mouth, nose, and ears) to basic environmental factors such as texture, sound, scent, light, and colour (Madichie, 2012). Consumer perception influences decision making and, as a result, it is a part of consumer behaviour (Belch & Belch, 2009). Consumer perception happens when the consumer leans on their personal experiences, beliefs, expectations, and needs. It is essential that those internal sources of motivation are satisfied by taking action that will allow for satisfaction to be met. Furthermore, when a consumer believes that the benefit received outweighs the cost, their perceived value rises, as does their willingness to purchase again Asgarpour et al. (2015).

(Tu, 2013) conducted a study that intended to examine what restaurant factors influence consumer perception and increase perceived value. He researched 224 respondents that visited a restaurant in the recent month. The results showed aesthetics of food and quality of food have a positive effect on consumer perceived value. These findings are in agreement with Grewal et al. (2018) who discovered that consumers are unwilling to pay for unattractive produce at the supermarket. According to this study, consumers value aesthetics more than the healthy value of the produce at first glance. Consumers want produce that is both healthy and appealing to the eye.

### **2.2.3 Factors influencing consumer purchase decisions.**

Consumer decision making can be defined as a consumer's approach to making a decision (Eze & Bello, 2016). The visual aspects of a product, or even its packaging, can influence consumer purchase decisions because they provide an appealing means of communicating messages about product features at the point of purchase (Ha & Ayda, 2016). Customer purchasing decisions are influenced by both the consumer and the environment. According to (Ramya & Ali, 2016), the factors affecting customer purchasing decisions include social, economic, personal, and cultural. Each of them plays a critical role.

Singh & Verma, (2017) examined the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour towards food, therefore, they researched factors influencing consumer behaviour and factors influencing purchase behaviour. They researched 611 consumers, in India. The results showed that knowledge, subjective norms, price and health consciousness influence consumer attitude towards buying food. Similarly, Diallo et al. (2013) found that there is a significant influence of the following factors on consumer purchase decisions image perceptions, attitude, value consciousness and store brand price range. These findings contrast with Muniady et al. (2014) who discovered that personal factors such as personality and lifestyle of the consumers are a major influence on consumer purchase decisions.

### **2.2.4 Factors influencing purchase intent**

According to Shah, et al., (2012), purchase intention is a type of decision-making that investigates why a consumer might want to buy a particular brand. Similarly, Kawa et al. (2013) describes consumer purchase intent as a consumer's propensity to purchase a specific product in a certain condition. Making a buying choice for a customer is a complicated procedure. Purchase intent is typically linked to consumer behavior, attitudes, and perceptions. Consumers' purchase behavior is critical in gaining access to and evaluating a certain product. It is an effective tool for determining the buying process. Value, perceived quality, and price can all influence purchase intent (Gogoi, 2013). Furthermore, consumers are influenced by internal or external motivations during the purchasing process. Researchers have proposed six stages before purchasing a product: knowledge, preference, awareness, persuasion, interest and purchase (Kotler et al. (2013).

A study was conducted by Paul & Rana, (2012) and it was aimed to investigate the factors influencing consumers and their intention to purchase organic food. They researched 463 respondents through face-to-face interviews. The results showed that health, education, and

availability of organic food has a positive influence on consumers' intention to purchase organic food. Likewise, Jie et al. (2015) aimed to research the factors influencing consumer purchase intent on fast food restaurants. Also found that hygiene of the restaurant is a factor that consumers consider. In addition, they discovered that food quality, food presentation, and store image are factors that have a positive effect on consumer purchase intent. These findings were in agreement with Wandebori & Wijaya, (2017) who discovered that food presentation, service quality, atmosphere, and food quality all have a positive impact on purchase intent.

### **2.3 Summary of Knowledge and Research Gaps**

Aesthetics in food is becoming increasingly important to many consumers. People are becoming pickier about the appearance of their meals, preferring to engage with more visually appealing meals (Tu, 2013). Furthermore, social media appears to be playing a major role in this, as aesthetically pleasing content in the form of images, videos, and ephemeral stories is receiving significantly more engagement (Azzam & Waleed, 2020). As a result, social media users, including restaurants with social media accounts, strive to create aesthetically appealing meals to increase their engagement and chances to get more eyes on their social media content Michel et al. (2014). Also, restaurants are beginning to see the value in working with food stylists and photographers who have the expertise in creating and photographing exquisitely plated meals for their social media content (Syahbani & Widodo, 2017).

Very little research on the influence of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intention to purchase food has been done around the world. Furthermore, there is no research on the influence of food aesthetics on Kenyan consumers in specific. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the concept of food aesthetics is influencing a new form of restaurant marketing. It will investigate the factors that influence consumers' perceptions and intentions to purchase food after viewing similar meals that have been plated differently. This will be investigated by examining the techniques used by food stylists and food photographers to create a well-plated meal. There will also be an examination of the methods used by food bloggers and vloggers to share information about restaurants on social media.

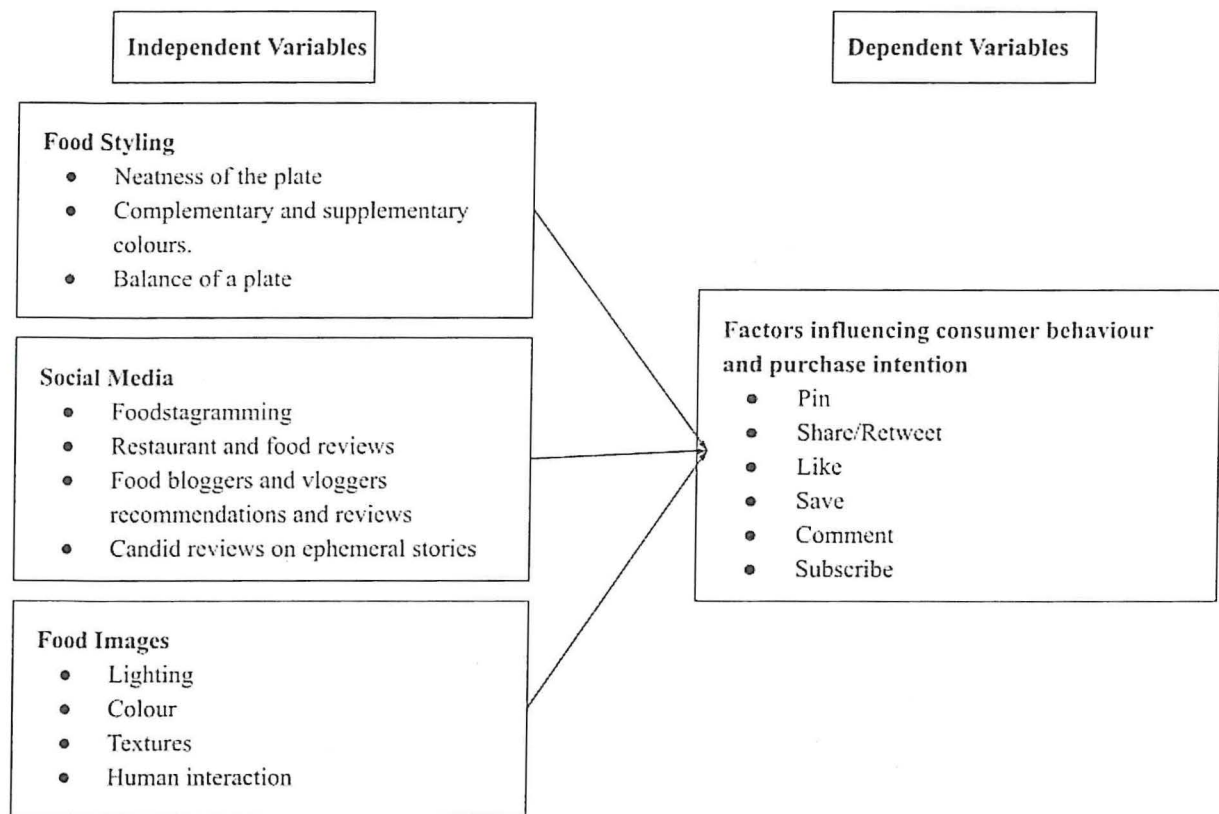
There has been a lot of research done on food bloggers and their role in marketing in countries such as Egypt, India, Indonesia, China, and Portugal. In some ways, this relates to the topic of this paper, as food bloggers are now an effective tool in restaurant marketing.

These research papers, however, do not concentrate on the aesthetics of the food and the role it plays in encouraging food bloggers to share photos of it. As a result, the information shared on these research papers is of limited use to this study. Furthermore, they concentrate on how blogs and vlogs contribute to restaurant marketing from the view of a consumer. They do not pay attention to the visuals used. Instead, they analyze the impressions, mentions and engagement on the blogs. This study, on the other hand, will concentrate on imagery and videography and what they each convey. This paper will also examine the tone of language used in blogs, determining whether it is enthusiastic, persuasive, or descriptive. This visual analysis will assist restaurants, food stylists, and food photographers in creating meaningful and visually appealing content that will entice consumers without much effort.

In the research papers that investigated the impact of food aesthetics on consumer perception, the researchers only showed the respondents images of breakfast from one restaurant Destriana et al. (2020). This resulted in them receiving biased responses to breakfast meals only. As a result, this research paper will attempt to make the responses more reliable by showing the respondents pictures of breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks, and desserts.

#### **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a collection of interconnected concepts that, when combined, provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Jabareen, 2009). The conceptual framework presents the theorized role of food aesthetics on consumer perception and intention to purchase food in Nairobi, Kenya. Below is the conceptual framework for this study. This study will focus on food styling, the relationship between food aesthetics and consumer perception, the factors that influence consumer perception, the types of media used to share food content on social media, the factors that influence consumer purchase intention, and the factors that influence consumer purchase decisions.



**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework**

**Source: Author's (2021)**

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the data collection and analysis process used to comprehend food stylists' techniques for creating an aesthetically pleasing meal, as well as how it influences consumer perception and intention to purchase food in Kenya. Because of the interest in perceptions, attitudes, and ideologies based on content that demonstrates food aesthetics, this study employed a qualitative research method which was a sort of inquiry that sought to understand people's feelings and experiences. This chapter concentrated on research design, population, sampling method and size, data collection methods and procedures, research quality and validity, and ethical concerns. The collection and analysis process were anchored by the following questions:

What are the attitudes towards unattractive meals vis a vie attractive meals? How are these attitudes influences by food bloggers on social media? What compels consumers to share photos of their food and provide information about their restaurant experiences?

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study utilized both a descriptive and quantitative research design. The descriptive research design aimed to convey information about the characteristics of a sample and the relationships between the phenomena, situations, and events observed by the researchers (Thyer, 2010). Although data for this type of research may be gathered qualitatively, it is frequently analyzed quantitatively, using percentages, frequencies, averages, or other statistical analyses to establish relationships (Nassaji, 2015). The use of this research strategy was dictated by the nature of the study, which sought to produce more suggestions for future research based on the impressions of the audience.

The descriptive research design was also used in this study since the researchers were interested in the responses, feelings, and experiences of the participants as expressed through their narratives. The primary focus was on the perception and attitudes of the target audience toward food aesthetics and presentation. Primary data was acquired through the conduct of questionnaires and the recording of the responses of the participants.

#### **3.2 Population and Sampling**

People who have social media profiles and are interested in food were the primary target audience for this research, which was conducted online. Because these individuals are

familiar with the workings of social media and the culinary community, it was simpler to engage them in this research. Besides that, they have the knowledge and experience necessary to react to the questions that were posed during the data collection process. Unlike most businesses, most restaurants are unaware that the content they post on social media has the power to attract and entice visitors to visit their establishments. As a result, they don't try to develop visually appealing material for their social media platforms. That being the case, they place greater focus on making their menus visually appealing. Consequently, engaging with people who are social media knowledgeable allowed this research to demonstrate that visually appealing photos of food can genuinely entice customers to walk through the doors of restaurants.

In statistics, sampling is the process of picking units (e.g., individuals or organizations) from a population of interest to be able to fairly simplify our findings back to the population from which they were selected (Davis, 2005) . Rather than using random selection, this study employed non-probability sampling, which entails selecting respondents based on a clear understanding of why some cases or individuals should be included while others should be excluded (Yin, 2003). In particular, the quota sampling approach was employed in this study, which is a type of non-probability sampling. In this technique, participants are chosen based on specified qualities rather than through a random selection process. The goal was to ensure that the whole sample had the same distribution of characteristics as the general population. The quotas were based on age, gender, social class, and income level. In the context of this study, consumers who are interested in food, frequent restaurant visitors, and have a strong social media presence were targeted. 170 of such individuals were selected for the study.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Copies of this questionnaire were distributed to responders via a link, where they were able to complete it virtually. All questions in the questionnaire should be answered to the best of the respondent's ability. In addition, they were expected to be truthful and objective in their responses to the questions.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

According to (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009) data analysis is the process of systematically employing statistical and/or logical tools to describe and illustrate, summarize, and recap, and assess facts to make informed decisions. Once the responses were gathered, they were cross-

checked to make coding and processing easier for the purposes of analysis. It was necessary to code replies into definite variables before doing quantitative research and applying a method of analysis to the data (Hameed, 2020) . This ensured that all responses were accurately reflected during the analysis process.

The responses to the questionnaires were checked for any errors made, and any questionnaires that contain errors were rejected. Using the content analysis approach, which is a systematic qualitative description of the objective or units of study, according to Vaismoradi et al. (2013), the findings of the research were assessed. Additionally, it gave a full description of the sampled items. The results were analyzed using the frequency of appearance of the items as a proxy for their relevance. The specific classification system that was utilized to record the data for this study was content analysis, which determined the frequency and trends with which the objectives' concepts were expressed. This was then regarded as a measure of objective direction or bias. Data tabulation and presentation on a table was utilized to create a visual representation of individual units about which descriptive and explanatory remarks was made based on the sampled content. Data groups aided in the final compilation of results and interpretations.

### **3.5 Research Quality**

#### **3.5.1 Reliability**

The degree to which the user or other researchers who may use this research have faith in the data acquired and the amount to which this study is free of errors is referred to as reliability (Mohajan, 2017) . The test-retest procedure was utilized to ensure the reliability of this research. According to Vaz et al. (2013), the test-retest approach is used when the same sampling technique is used on the same population twice. This study replicated the procedure by administering the questionnaire again with the same sample size and then determining the correlation between the two results.

#### **3.5.2 Validity**

The validity of a study was determined by how the observations were interpreted and whether the researcher's conclusions were supported by the data collected or previous research (Peräkylä, 2011) . Validity as a unified notion includes issues of criteria, content, and consequences into a construct framework for theoretically investigating the relationship between research variables, such as food aesthetics, consumer perception and purchase intention (Messick, 2008) . Furthermore, the significance of cohesive validity was that it

ensures that the results' correctness, significance, and practicability are closely intertwined and that they were trustworthy. This research was validated by sufficient evidence, ensuring its validity. Data collection methods and questionnaire size were evidenced in the research design. Content and criterion validity was examined.

As mentioned by (Yaghmaie, 2009) the term "content validity" refers to the extent to which a piece of study covers what it claims to cover. To validate this research, the focus will be on a subset of elements that collectively constitute the research's substance. As evidenced by each chapter, this research has thoroughly examined every facet of electronic banking and its impact on customer satisfaction.

Criteria validity forecasts the degree to which a certain metric is connected to an outcome in a particular study (Yaghmaie, 2009) . The population, the size of the questionnaire, the data collection method, and finally the data analysis all contributes to the research's result.

### **3.6 Ethical Issues in Research**

This research ensured that ethical standards were adhered to throughout the data collection process. The researcher verified that the data collected was used solely for academic purposes. The respondents' identity was maintained throughout the research, and their agreement was obtained well in advance. Lastly, the data obtained was managed with the utmost confidentiality to protect the responders.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter analyzes and discusses food aesthetics and purchase intention, with an emphasis on how they are influenced by and affect consumer behavior. The findings and debate offered herein go into the critical topics of food aesthetics, social media, consumer behavior, and purchasing intention.

#### 4.0 Sample Representation

A sample representation is defined as a small quantity or a subset of a larger quantity or subset of something (Omar, 2014) . It has the same qualities and proportions as a larger population and can be used to represent it. It enables researchers to generalize the knowledge they have gathered to a bigger group of people. The goal is to ensure that the whole sample has the same distribution of characteristics as the general population as collecting data from the greater population is difficult.

The population defined was represented using a non-probability sampling strategy. This study's demographic studied 170 Kenyans living in Nairobi and between the ages of 18 and 34 who have an interest in eating. They belonged to the medium upper socioeconomic classes and have sufficient spare income for little indulgences. These individuals have an active social media presence and are frequent restaurant patrons. In practice, this strategy assures that all respondents meet the researcher's demographic requirements, which is the cultural dimension in this case.

#### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

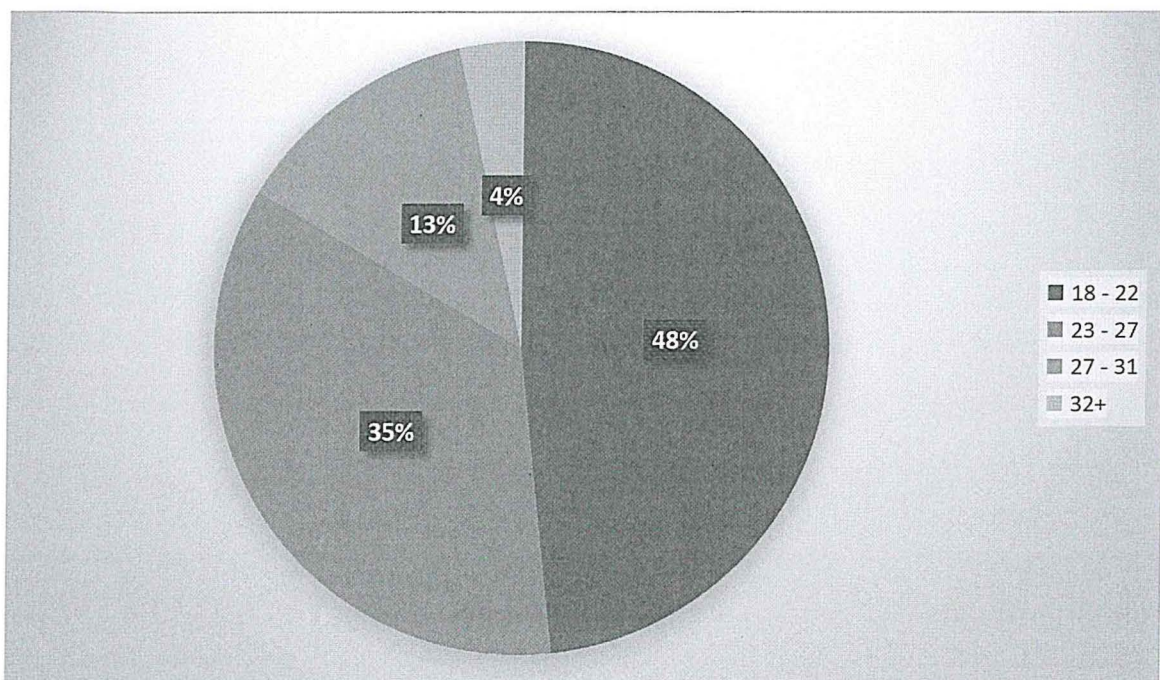
The quantitative data acquired via the online questionnaire was analyzed using Google Forms, which provides the necessary statistical analysis to test the hypotheses. To eliminate the risk of mathematical errors, this website was chosen to undertake accurate and dependable analysis. This site enables the researcher to evaluate the questionnaire's results by displaying a summary view of the data, browsing individual responses, creating custom charts, focusing on certain data views and segments, and exporting the results in numerous formats. Additionally, this study used a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: the demographics section to learn more about our participants, and the food-related photos section. According to the data collected, the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 31. All responders are Nairobi-based Kenyans. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and multiple-choice questions were used during the data analysis procedure.

Certain questions required the participant to select just one response, while others allowed the person to check more than one box. One open-ended question was included to allow participants to express their thoughts on this subject, which may aid the researcher in interpreting the data.

## Section One

### Question 1: Age

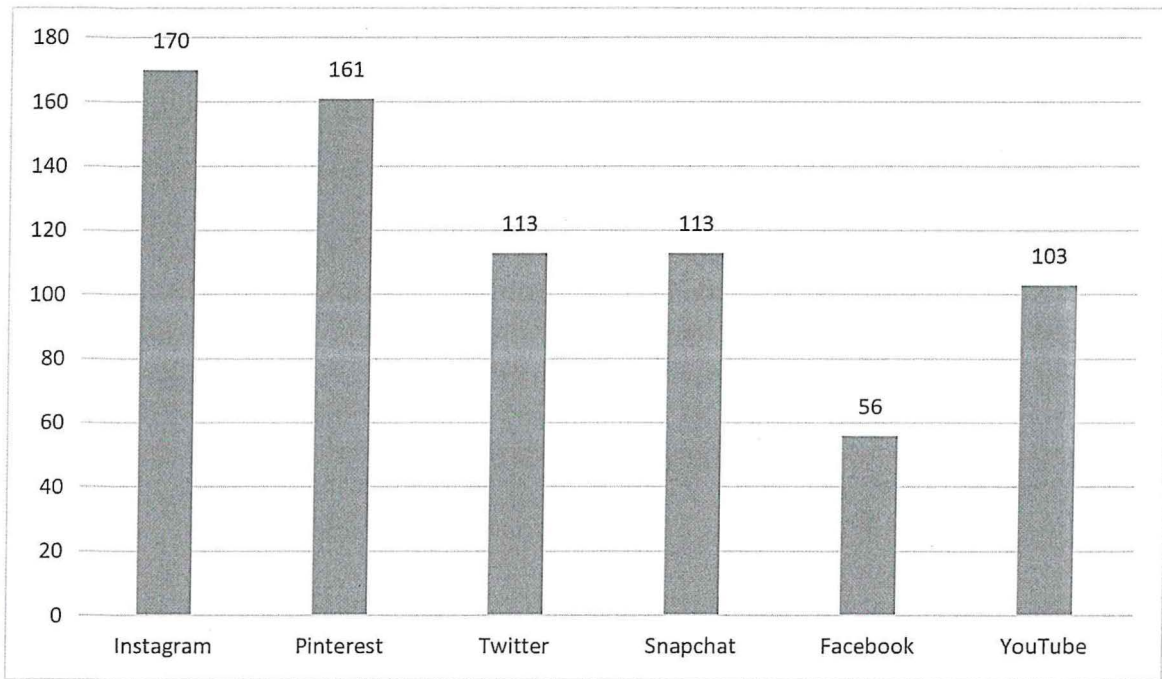
Majority of the people that answered the questionnaire belong to the 18 – 22 age group at 48%, followed by 23 – 27 at 35%, 27 – 31 at 13% and 32+ at 3%. This shows that majority of the people that answered this questionnaire are members of Generation Z group.



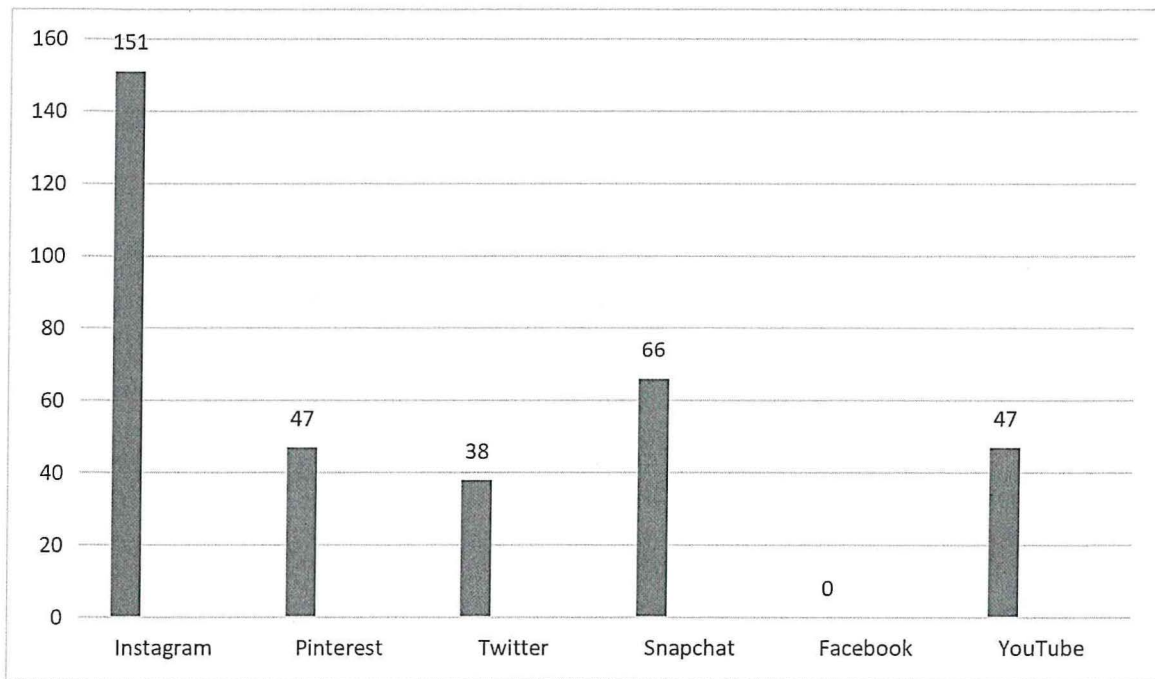
### Question 2: Do you have a social media account?

100% of the participants said that they have an active social media account. This means that everyone that answered this questionnaire, have knowledge about how social media works, as an information sharing platform. Furthermore, it shows that they've all been exposed to food content on social media.

### Question 3: Which social media networks do you use?



**Question 4: What are your 2 most active social media accounts?**

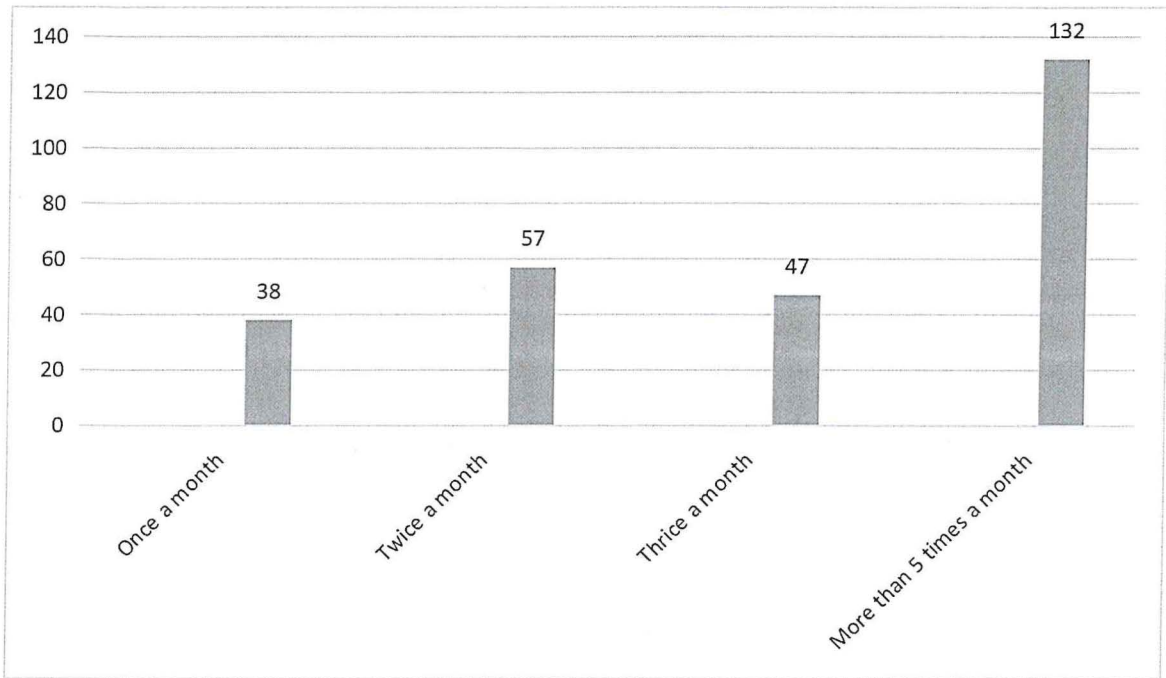


151 respondents are most active on Instagram.

**Question 5: Would you consider yourself a food lover?**

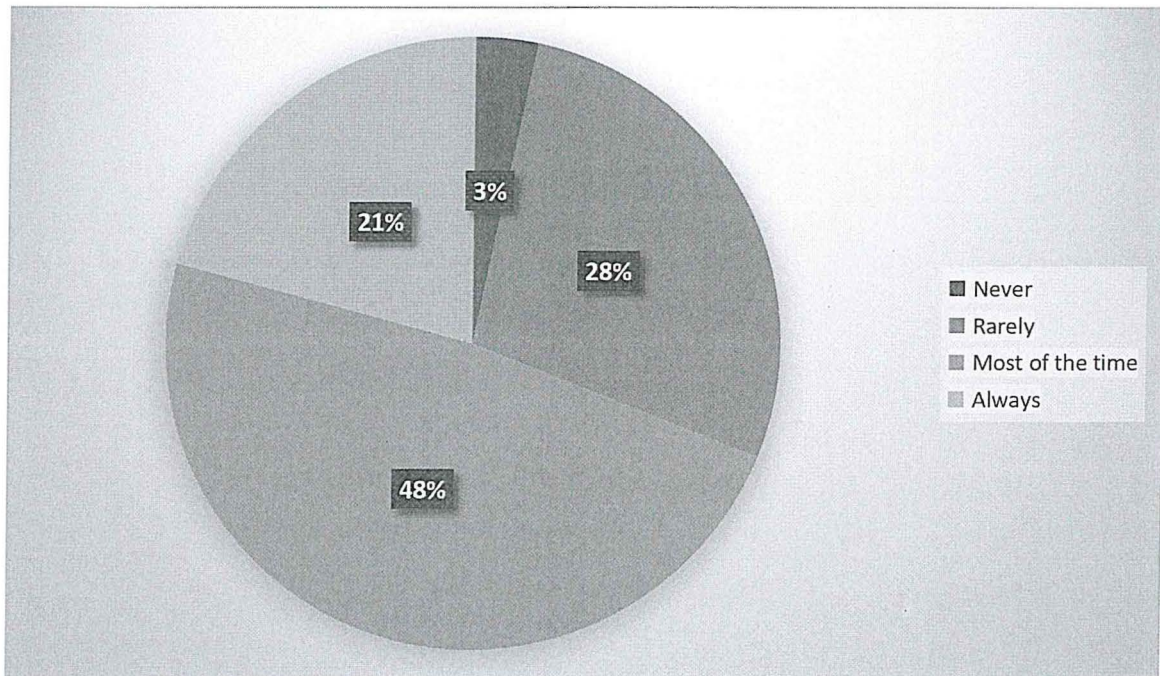
82.8% of the respondents said yes, 13.8% said maybe and 3.4% said no. Therefore, majority of the respondents consider themselves food lovers.

**Question 6: How often do you go to restaurants in a month?**

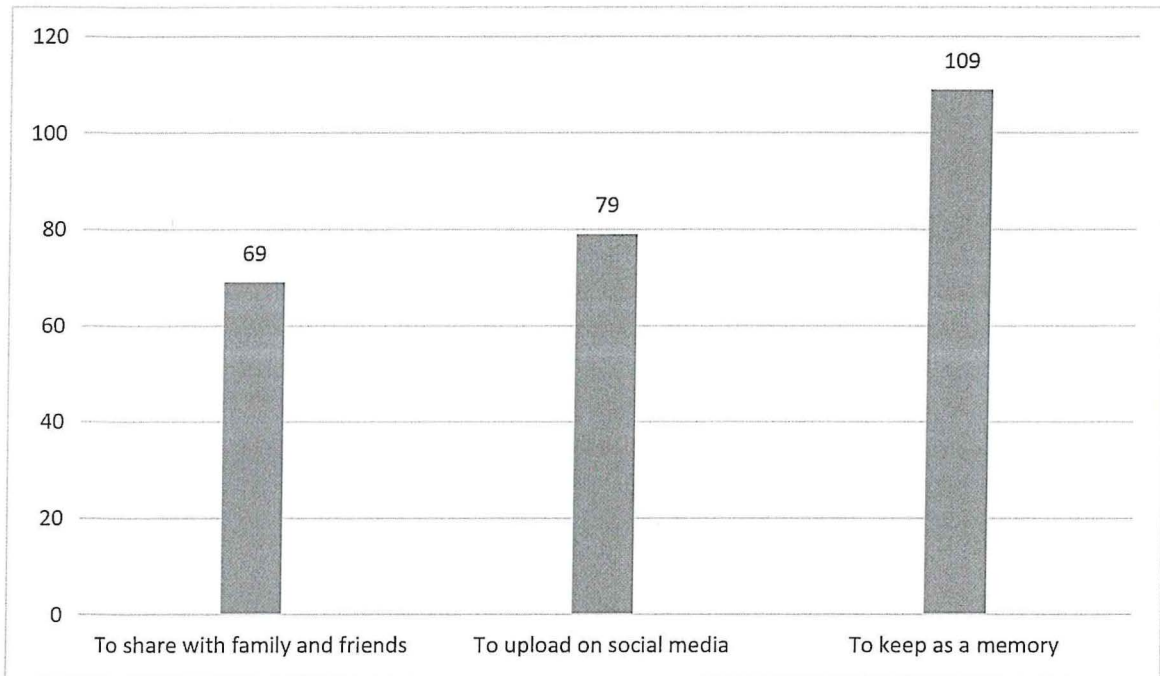


This shows that majority of the respondents visit different restaurants regularly.

**Question 7: Do you take pictures of your food before eating?**



**Question 8: Why do you take pictures of your food?**



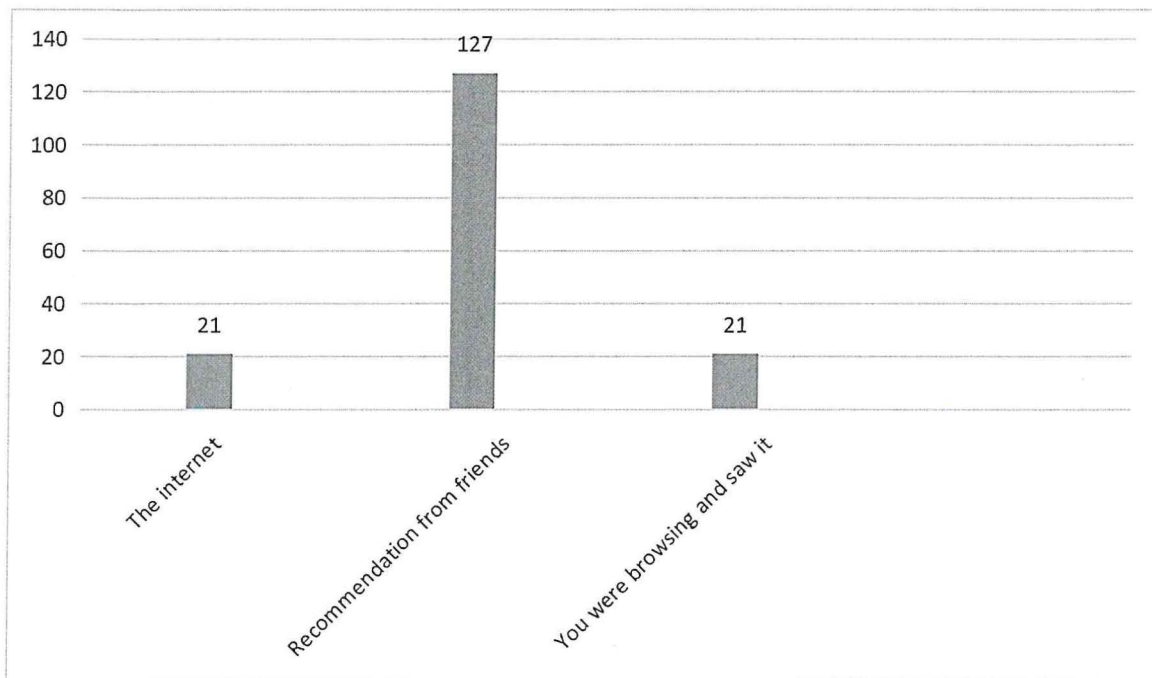
**Question 9: Do you pay attention to images of food shared on social media?**

96.6% of the respondents said yes and 3.4% said no.

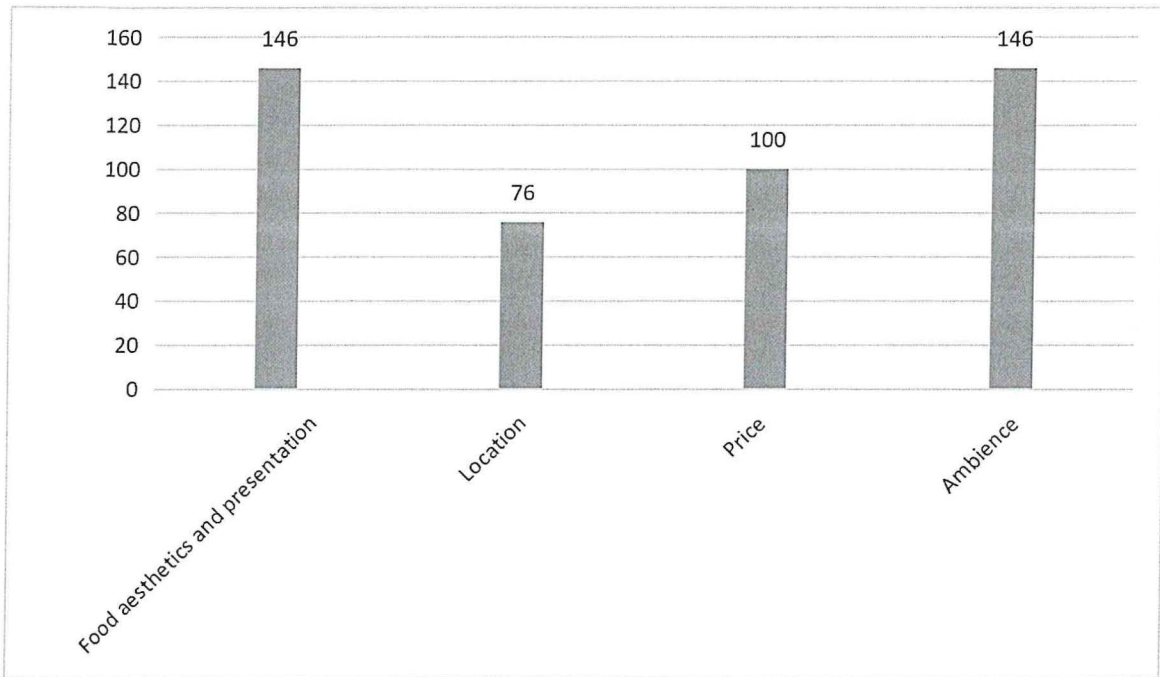
**Question 10: Have you used social media to look for new restaurants to visit?**

60% of respondents said yes.

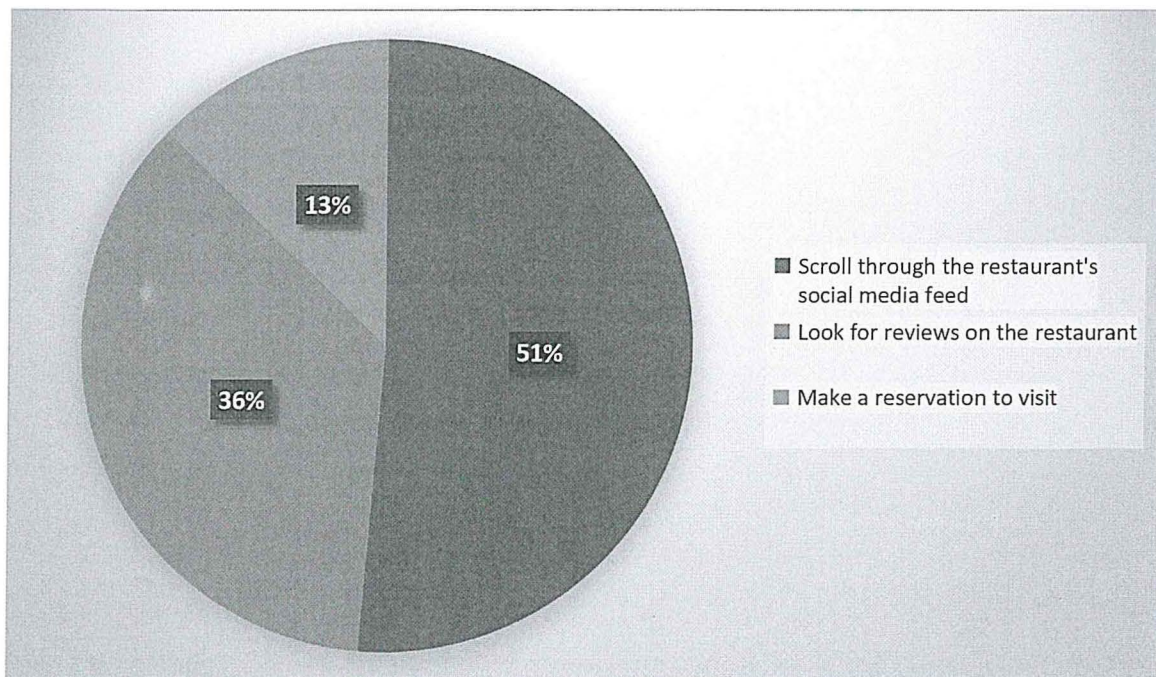
**Question 11: If 'NO', what have you used to look for new restaurants?**



**Question 12: What would attract you to try out a new restaurant based on their social media pictures? (You can pick more than one)**



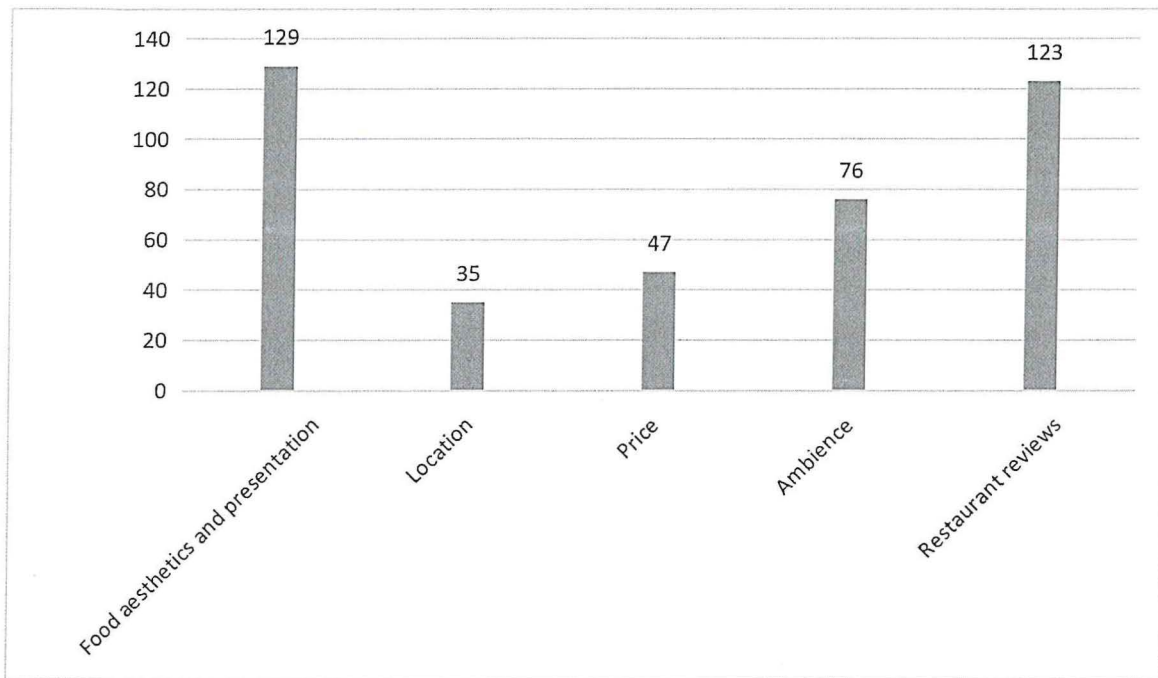
**Question 13: When you see an account with pictures of beautiful meals, are you inclined to...**



**Question 14: Have you ever visited a restaurant after seeing it on someone else's social media page?**

100% said yes.

**Question 15: What drew you to visit the place you saw on someone's social media page?**  
(Pick more than one)



**Question 16: Would beautiful pictures of food alone attract you to a restaurant?**

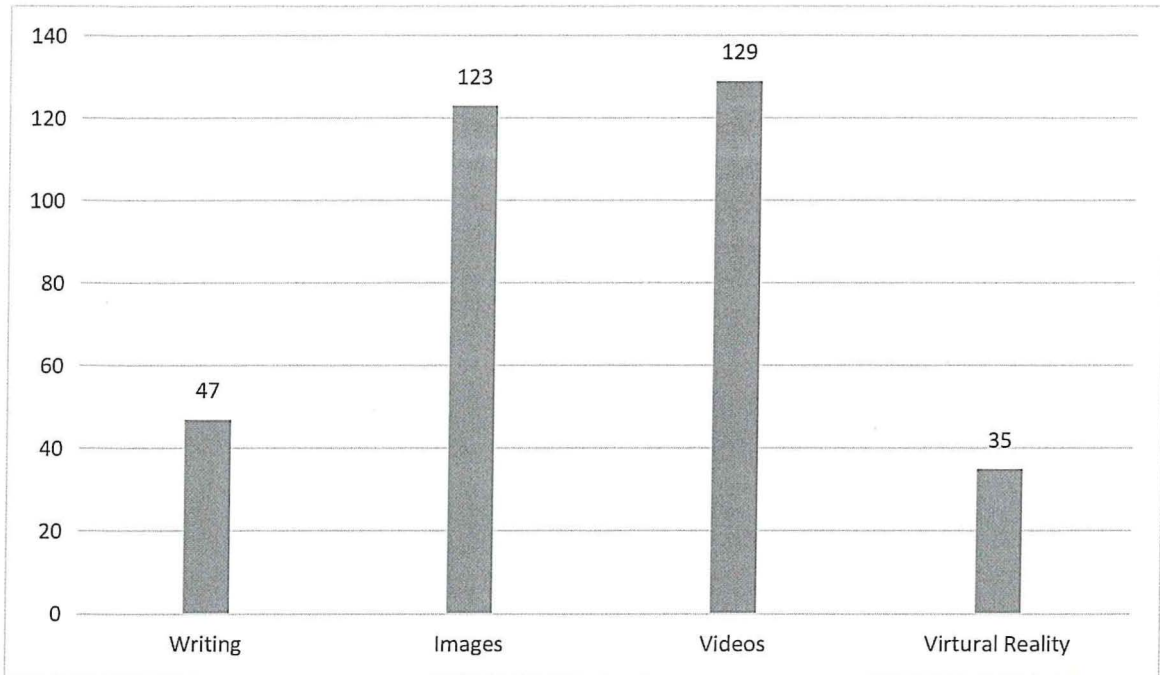
56.7% said yes and 43.3% said no.

**Question 17: If "YES" in the above question, why?**

- If the food presentation and aesthetics look good, I'd like to believe the food tastes as good.
- Because that is the foundation of a good culinary experience... I would be looking to recreate/relive a good review.
- One so I can get some good content being a creator. For some reason, I subconsciously relate food aesthetics to good customer service or a good experience.
- I eat with my eyes and when food looks good it's more appealing to me.
- How food is presented is an art, so much effort has been taken to make food look amazing not forgetting the art in photography as well. A good photo of food would make one salivate without having to taste it, you can't sell a meal without someone having a glimpse of how their food would look like.
- Aesthetics is important.
- I love to explore new vibes! If the restaurant is expressed to me as having a unique 'vibe' I want to research it and learn more about it.

- It shows that the food served is of high quality and the chefs have taken time to create a meal that I can enjoy!

**Question 18: What type of content do you prefer to view food in?**



**Section 2**

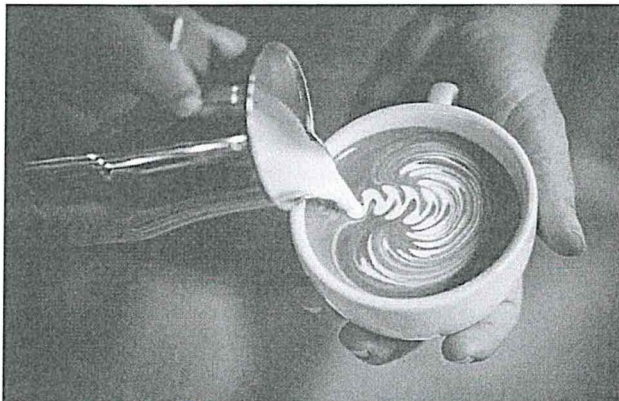


Image A

Image B



**Which image is more aesthetically pleasing?**

100% said image A.

**Which one are you more likely to buy?**

94.7% said that they are more likely to buy image A and 5.3% said that they are more likely to buy image B.

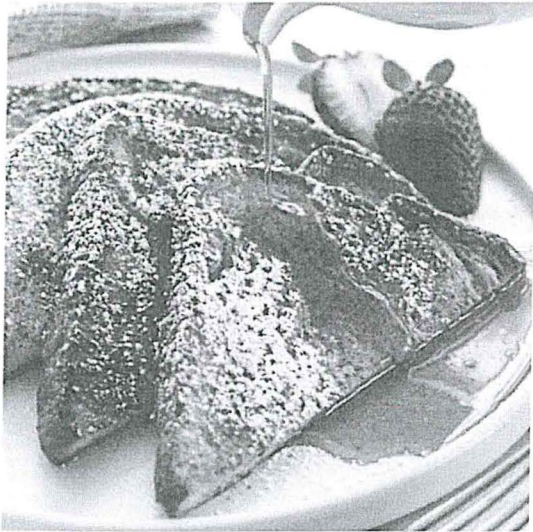


Image A

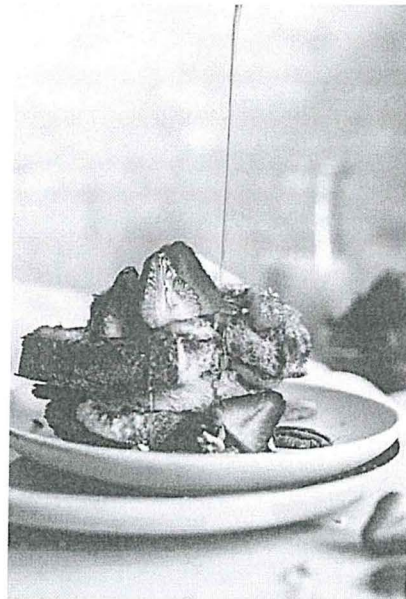


Image B

**Which French toast looks more expensive?**

76.7% said that image B looks more expensive and 23.3% said that French toast A looks more expensive.

**Which one are you more likely to buy?**

73.7% are more likely to buy French toast B whereas 26.3% are more likely to buy French toast A.

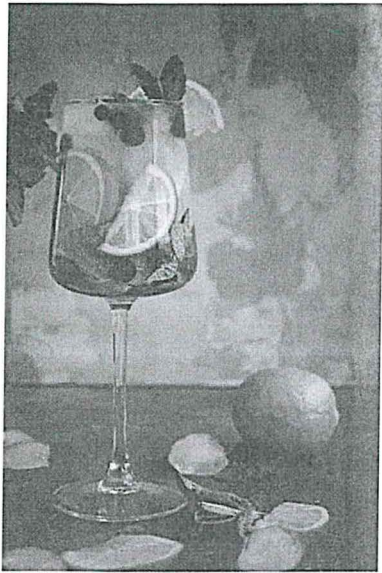


Image A



Image B

**Which mojito would you buy?**

56.7% would buy image A, whereas 43.3% would buy image B.

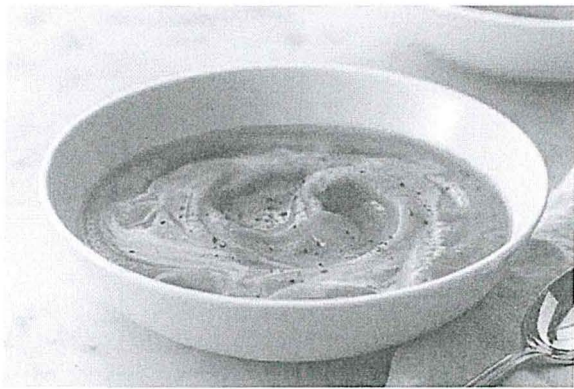


Image A

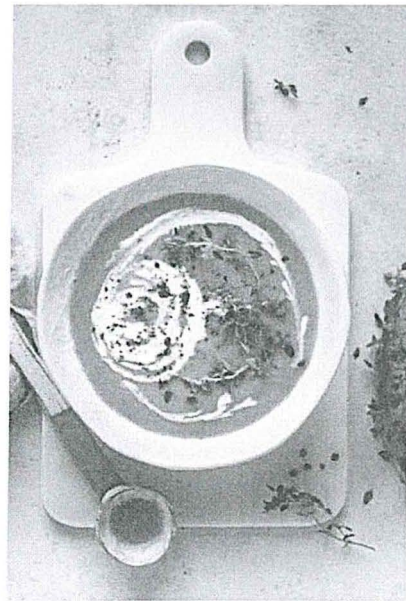


Image B

**Which pumpkin soup would you take a picture of and share on social media?**

96.7% would share image B whereas, 3.3% would share image A.

**Which one are you more likely to buy?**

78.9% are more likely to buy image B, where are 21.1% would buy image A.

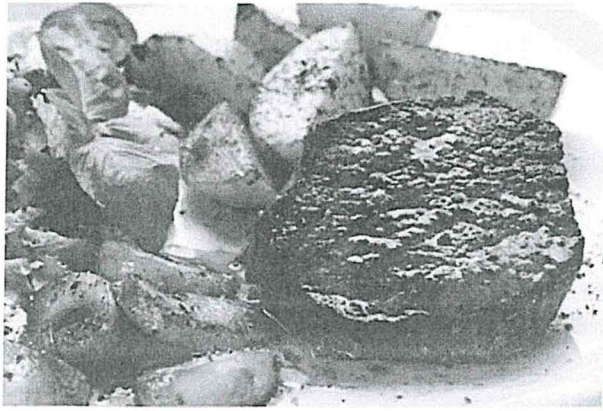


Image A

Image B



**Which picture of pepper steak would convince you to visit the restaurant that serves it?**

83.3% stated that they would visit a restaurant based on image B, where are 16.7% would visit a restaurant based on image B.

**Which one are you more likely to buy?**

68.4% are more likely to buy image B, whereas 31.6% are more likely to buy image A.

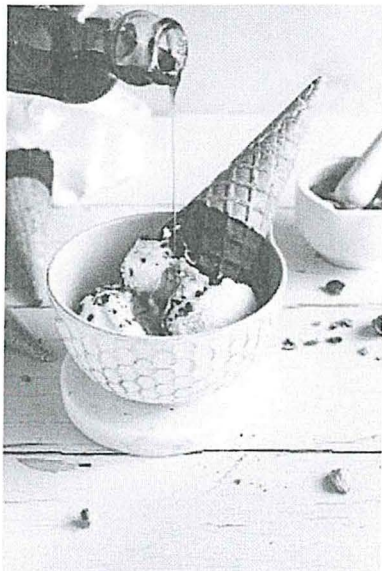


Image A

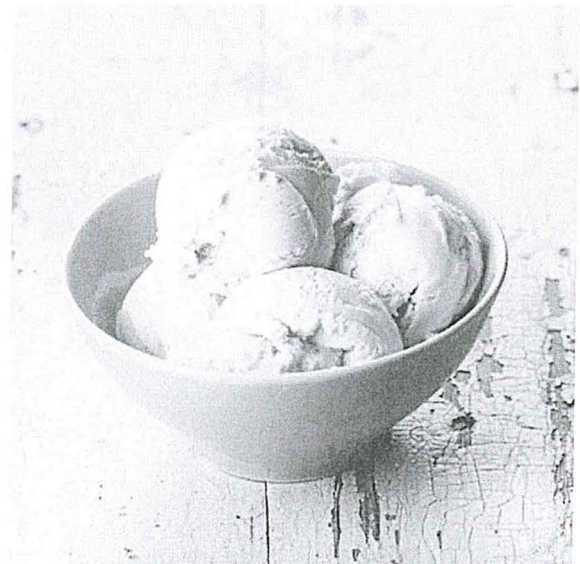


Image B

**In your opinion, which picture of vanilla ice cream would get more engagement on social media?**

87.5% said that image A would get more engagement on social media, whereas 12.5% said that image B would get more engagement on social media.

#### **Which one are you more likely to buy?**

73.7% said that they are more likely to buy image A, whereas 26.3% are more likely to buy image B.

#### **4.4 Correlational Analysis**

According to the data, most of the population is between the ages of 18 and 27 and is active on social media. The fact that 100% of those who answered the survey had an active social media account demonstrates that they are familiar with how social media functions as a medium to share information and experiences. In addition, it demonstrates that they have all been exposed to food-related content on social media platforms. Additionally, the most often used social media platforms by responders are Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat – Instagram is the most popular social network among respondents. Instagram is primarily used to share food-related content. As a result, food enthusiasts will guarantee that they actively use the app when looking for places to visit. Many respondents report dining out more than five times each month. This demonstrates their involvement in the restaurant industry. Additionally, many responders photograph their food to share the event on social media and to save the memories.

96.6% of respondents indicated that they pay attention to social media photos. 60% of respondents indicated that they use social media to discover new restaurants to visit. They are primarily attracted by the aesthetics of the dish and the restaurant's atmosphere. However, what motivates people to book is a suggestion from online and offline pals. Additionally, 56.7% stated that they visit a restaurant just for the beauty of the cuisine. The reasons they provided indicated that they associate food quality with how it appears on social media. As a result, if the food appears appealing, it must also taste appealing. Additionally, a nicely arranged dish signals that the chefs have made a concerted effort to provide a positive dining experience for their patrons. Additionally, they indicated that a good photograph of food would cause them to salivate without tasting it. Respondents also prefer to view food content in videos and images.

#### **4.5 Summary of Findings**

Consumers are influenced by food aesthetics, as shown by the research. It is something people display on their social media platforms, and thus something they seek. They are

initially drawn to a restaurant by its food aesthetics and ambience, and then by recommendations from friends, both online and offline. For the majority, people are willing to make a reservation based on the aesthetics of the food alone - this indicates a favorable purchasing intention. Additionally, prices are not a factor in determining whether respondents visit a restaurant. Food may appear more expensive, but people will still purchase it in order to photograph it and post it on social media or save it as a memory. Additionally, the replies indicated that photographs of food that have a human aspect are more visually appealing than those that do not.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the use of current theories and relevant literature, this chapter seeks to expand on the qualitative and quantitative findings of Chapter 4 to provide a more in-depth study of the findings in the following chapter. This will enable the researcher to present a plausible rationale for the suggested framework as well as a discussion of the findings after they have completed their analysis of the data.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

##### **5.1.1 Summary of Objective 1**

This objective was to identify types of content in food advertisements, on social media, that attract and capture audience's attention in Nairobi. According to the results of the study, the respondents responded that videos and photographs are the types of content in which people want to view food. This is in line with Destriana et al. (2020) who demonstrated that the format presented in food aesthetics is important. They stated that social media images educate the interest of its users and gorgeous pictures of food on Instagram attract intrigued users to visit the restaurants that have been 'foodstagrammed' by other users. Similarly, Pandey et al. (2020) indicated that consumers prefer to view food content in video format since it allows them to view food in its raw and uncut form. Which, then, empowers individuals to make informed purchase decisions.

Building on Hendrayati & Puspita, (2020), this research found that it is the substance that has the greatest appeal to them, rather than the format. This means that reviews from food bloggers – which can be in both photo and video format – have a weighty impact on consumer purchase decisions towards food brands and restaurants. Furthermore, the preferred social networks that the respondents use to search for food content are Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest. Those sites are mostly where video and image content is consumed.

##### **5.1.2 Summary of Objective 2**

This objective aimed to investigate whether visuals of aesthetically pleasing food affect consumer perception. Most respondents stated that they are aware of food content shared on social media. As a result, they utilize social media to locate new restaurants. This is in agreement with Pandey et al. (2020) who stated that consumers trust online content creators to inform them about forthcoming restaurants, food quality, and restaurant owner standards.

Most respondents believed that making an aesthetically pleasing meal demonstrates that the food supplied is of good quality and that the chefs have taken the effort to create something they can enjoy. Someone stated, "Food presentation is an art form; so much work has been expended to make food appear great, not to mention the art of photography. Without tasting the food, a nice photograph of it will make one salivate; you cannot sell a dinner without giving the customer a preview of how their dish would look." These findings agree with (Tu, 2013) who's study showed that aesthetics of food and quality of food have a positive effect on consumer perceived value. According to Grewal et al. (2018) consumers value aesthetics more than the healthy value of the food at first glance. This shows that the consumer perception of aesthetically pleasing food and food content is that it equates to a good quality food and a good food experience overall.

### **5.1.3 Summary of Objective 3**

To investigate whether visuals of aesthetically pleasing food affect purchase intent. Participants in the second section of the questionnaire were given the option to choose between two photos of food. Both dishes were presented in a professional manner, but one had more garnishing than the other. Furthermore, the respondents are not only captivated by food aesthetics and presentation shown on the social media that belong to the restaurants, but they are also drawn to food aesthetics and presentation on other people's restaurant reviews. This is in agreement with Jie et al. (2015) who discovered that food quality, food presentation, and store image are factors that have a positive effect on consumer purchase intent. Furthermore, Michel et al. (2014) found that provided in an art-inspired style was viewed as more artistic and liked than food presented in a non-art-inspired fashion, according to the findings. In addition, participants were willing to pay a higher price for food that was presented in a more appealing way. This is seen in the research results where 73.7% of the respondents were more likely to buy French toast B even though they thought that it looked expensive. This is because consumers believe that good food presentation translates into a good food experience.

### **5.1.4 Summary of Objective 4**

To investigate whether consumers make purchase decisions based on food reviews done on social media. The respondents also use social media to look up reviews of places that others have visited. Most respondents stated that they are more likely to purchase the photograph that has more garnishing on it. This is in accordance with Michel et al. (2014) who

discovered that presenting food in an aesthetically pleasant manner might enhance the dining experience and consumers are more likely to select food images that look appealing to the eye. Also, 56.7% of the respondents stated that they would be attracted to visit a restaurant with just beautiful pictures of food alone.

Furthermore, 100% of respondents also stated that they have visited a restaurant based on food reviews done by other social media users. They tend to trust reviews done by online content creators that they look up to. According to Freberg et al. (2011), food reviews are what helps people make decisions on what restaurant to visit and what food to try. Similarly, they will be able to gauge what to expect from the restaurant. 76.7% of them said that they were initially attracted to the page by the food aesthetics and presentation and 70% of them stated that the restaurant reviews also convinced them to visit the mentioned restaurant.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

According to this study's findings, food aesthetics and presentation do influence Nairobi's food enthusiasts. This study demonstrated how food has evolved into a social trend that people enjoy sharing and discussing. Instagram is the app where most online users to share their food content. Additionally, it is the platform that users rely on the most when looking for restaurants to visit as a lot of food reviews are done on that platform. Also, food reviews have enabled food enthusiasts to exchange opinions; as a result, social media users trust one another. Additionally, they value beautifully plated meals that are shared on social media via blogs, vlogs, ephemeral stories, and photos. The forms of content that captivate social media users are videos and photos.

"The eye eats before the mouth" is a classic Middle Eastern proverb that has been validated by this study's findings. The respondents all expressed thoughts implying that they take food aesthetics seriously and that it is a big factor in their restaurant selection selections. Social media has facilitated this by providing a platform that allows food enthusiasts to document their aesthetic, taste, and ambiance experiences with food. Additionally, because users have the capacity to share their comments, social media has compelled restaurants to serve food that looks exactly like the food they advertise both online and offline.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

The limits identified in this study provide fresh prospects for future research in the same topic area, with the goal of contributing to the current literature and assisting in the establishment of a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under consideration.

In this sense, it would be worthwhile to investigate all the characteristics in a restaurant that inspire consumers to take many photographs in the future. Is it simply the presence of delicious food that encourages people to share food content? What other factors exist in the immediate vicinity of restaurants that influence consumer purchase intentions? Is it enough for people to visit restaurants solely based on their food aesthetics? This information can be used to enhance the existing framework by highlighting the variety of experiences that customers can have in restaurants that are not solely focused on food aesthetics. A parallel investigation into all the motivations that drive customers to share pictures can be conducted in the future, as this will provide marketing managers with yet another insight into their customers' behavior and how they can elevate these motivations to ensure the positive spread of e-word of mouth.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

According to the results of the study, 129 out of 170 respondents stated that they prefer to view food content in video form. However, the research only featured food content in image form. Therefore, a suggestion for further research would be to share food content in the video format. This is to check if the results would still be the same as food content in image form.

#### **5.5 Limitations of Research**

Several limitations are associated with this study, as is always the case with research of this nature. However, these limitations can serve as a starting point for future investigations into the phenomenon of word-of-mouth spread in the form of visually appealing images shared on social media platforms. The following are the constraints that were discovered throughout this research:

Because the study's scope was limited to inhabitants of Nairobi, the findings cannot be extrapolated across Kenya, as there are notable differences in the lifestyles and perceptions of persons living in different cities, even within the same country.

Furthermore, even though the scope of the study was limited to solely food photographs, it is possible that these are not the only criteria that influence customers' perceptions of what makes food content shared on social media worthwhile for them to spend their hard-earned money.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



Ole Sangale Rd, Madaraka Estate  
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Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

To whom it may concern

#### **Academic Reference for Awendo, Nicole Tara- Student Number -111612**

Strathmore University offers the Bachelor in Commerce degree program. In their 4th year of study, each degree student is required to work on a Management Research Project. The project involves reading literature that relates to the research topic; data collection and analysis and finally preparing a written document of the research findings and recommendations.

Nicole is requesting to gather information to be used in her research. She is accountable for all information extracted from you and ensure that it will be used for research purpose only and will be kept confidential.

The research is entitled "**THE INFLUENCE OF FOOD AESTHETICS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND INTENTION TO PURCHASE FOOD IN NAIROBI**"  
We are looking forward for your co-operation and assistance to the above named student.

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.



Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Weremba".

**Mary Weremba**  
Manager, Undergraduate Programmes  
Strathmore Business School  
**Email: [mweremba@strathmore.edu](mailto:mweremba@strathmore.edu)**

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**APPENDIX II: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO THE RESPONDENTS**

**SECTION A**

1. Age:

- 18 – 22
- 23 – 27
- 27 – 31
- 32+

2. Do you have an Instagram account?

- YES
- NO

3. Which social media networks do you use? Click all that apply.

- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- YouTube

4. What are your 2 most active social media accounts?

- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- YouTube

5. Would you consider yourself a food lover?

- YES
  - NO
  - MAYBE
6. How often do you go to restaurants in a month?
- Once a month
  - Twice a month
  - Thrice a month
  - More than 5 times a month
7. Do you take pictures of your food before eating?
- Never
  - Rarely
  - Most of the time
  - Always
8. Why do you take pictures of your food? Click all that apply.
- To share with friends and family
  - To upload on social media
  - To keep as a memory
  - Other...
9. Do you pay attention to images of food shared on social media?
- YES
  - NO
10. Have you used social media to look for new restaurants to visit?
- YES
  - NO
11. If 'NO', what have you used to look for new restaurants?
- The internet

- Recommendations from friends
- You were browsing and saw it
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12. What would attract you to try out a new restaurant based on their social media pictures? (Pick more than one)

- Food aesthetics and presentation
- Location
- Price
- Ambience
- Other...

13. When you see an account with pictures of beautiful meals, are you inclined to: (Pick more than one)

- a) Scroll through the restaurant's social media feed
- b) Look for reviews about the restaurant
- c) Make a reservation to visit
- d) Other...

14. Have you ever visited a restaurant after seeing it on someone's Instagram Account?

- YES
- NO

15. If "YES", what drew you to visit the place you saw on someone's Instagram Account? (Pick more than one)

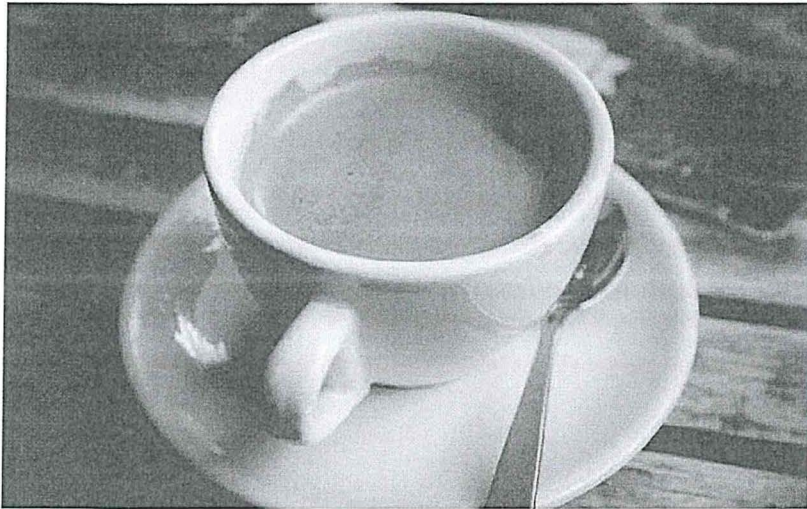
- Food aesthetics and presentation
- Location
- Price
- Ambience
- Restaurant review
- Other...

16. Would beautiful pictures of food alone attract you to a restaurant?

- YES
- NO
- If "YES" in the above question, why?

---

SECTION B

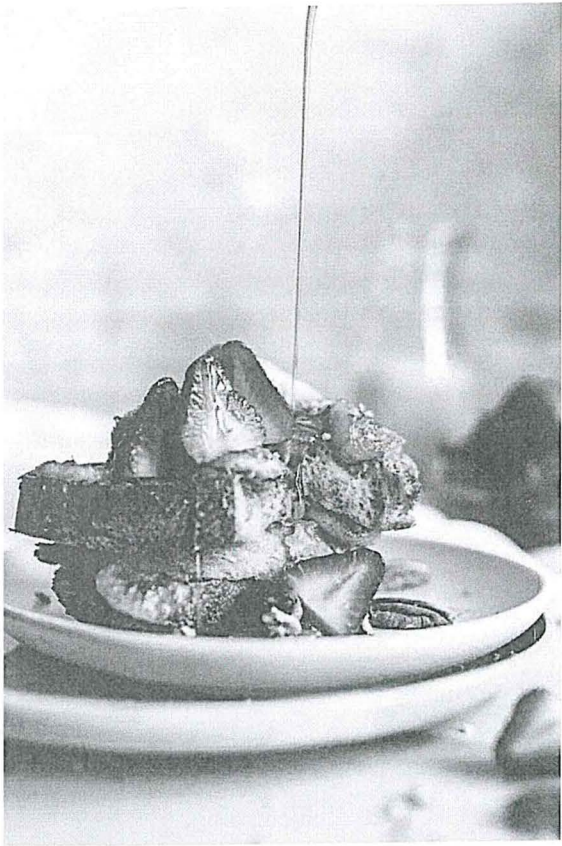


A.

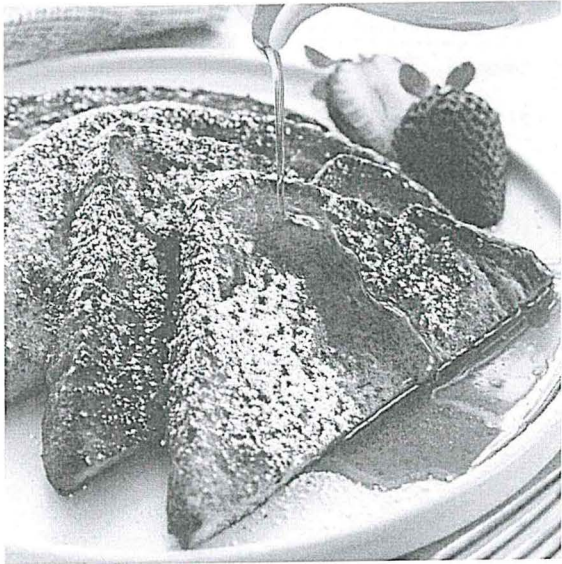


B.

1. Which image is more aesthetically pleasing?
  - A
  - B
2. Which one are you more likely to buy?
  - A
  - B



A.

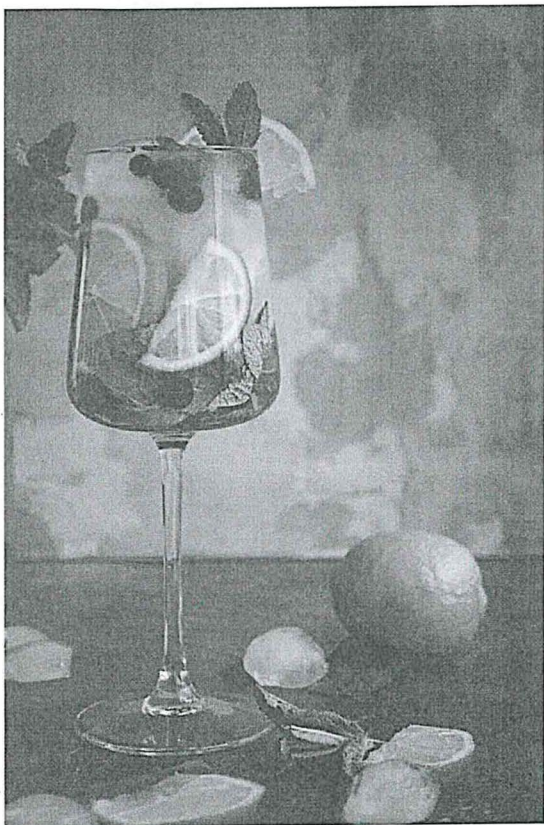


B.

1. Which French toast looks more expensive?
  - A
  - B
2. Which French toast are you more likely to buy?
  - A
  - B



A.



B.

1. Which mojito would you buy?

- A
- B



A.



B.

1. Which pumpkin soup would you take a picture of and share on social media?

- A
- B

2. Which one are you more likely to buy?

- A
- B



A.



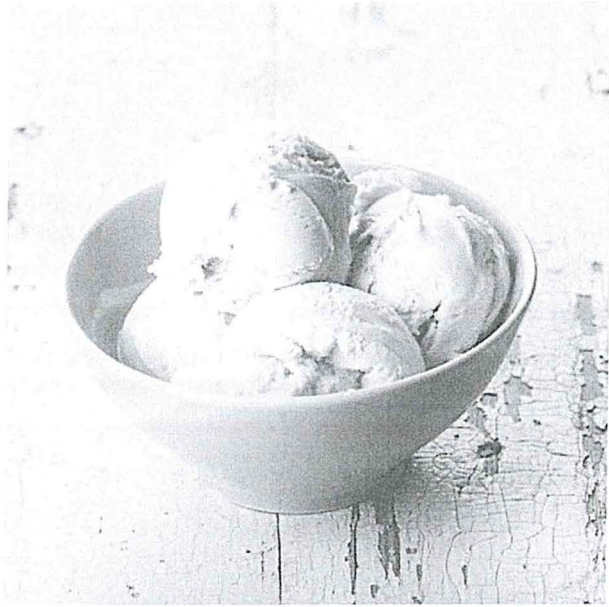
B.

1. Which picture of pepper steak would convince you to visit the restaurant that serves it?

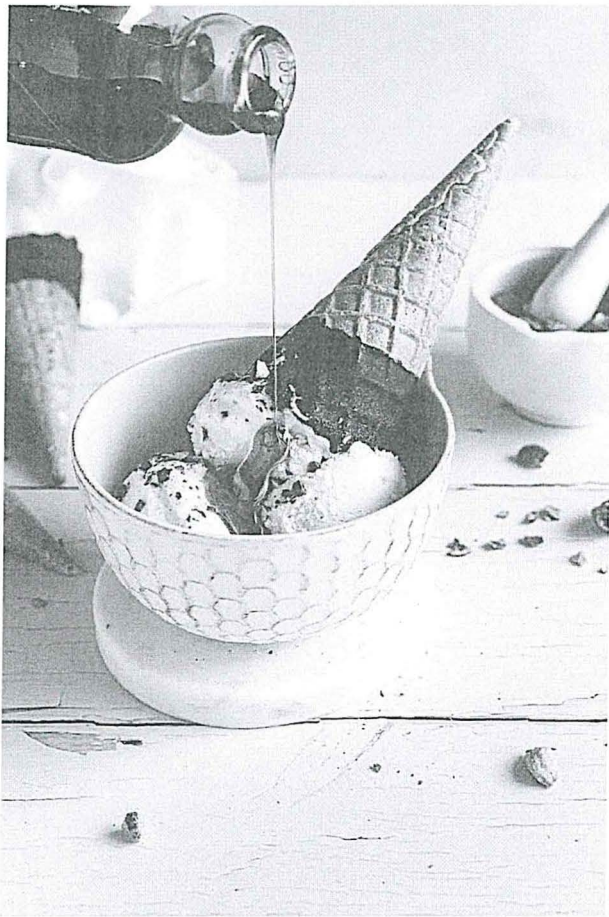
- A
- B

2. Which one are you more likely to buy?

- A
- B



A.



B.

1. In your opinion, which picture of vanilla ice cream would get more engagement on social media?

- A
- B

2. Which one are you more likely to buy?

- A
- B

## Document Information

Analyzed document	THE INFLUENCE OF FOOD AESTHETICS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND INTENTION TO PURCHASE FOOD IN NAIROBI - Final.docx (D133423795)
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## Sources included in the report

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<b>SA</b>	<b>2069155_MGT4002P_Dissertation.docx</b> Document 2069155_MGT4002P_Dissertation.docx (D26971406)	1
<b>SA</b>	<b>Synopsis_V_K_28.7.pdf</b> Document Synopsis_V_K_28.7.pdf (D77258916)	1
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<b>SA</b>	<b>Group24_Research Proposal.pdf</b> Document Group24_Research Proposal.pdf (D24494961)	1
<b>W</b>	URL: <a href="https://www.austriajuice.com/news-blog/instagram-food-and-beverages-trends-on-social-media">https://www.austriajuice.com/news-blog/instagram-food-and-beverages-trends-on-social-media</a> Fetched: 2021-01-27T14:40:26.0430000	1

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	The eye eats before the mouth." This saying emphasizes the significance of food presentation and its appeal to the eye		The eye eats before the mouth," stressing the importance of the appearance of food, its presentation and appeal to the eye.	
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	the eye eats before the mouth" is that human beings prefer to eat		The eye eats before the mouth," is that human beings prefer to eat	
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	the eye eats before the mouth", emphasizes that human beings prefer to		The eye eats before the mouth," is that human beings prefer to	
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6/16	SUBMITTED TEXT	15 WORDS	80% MATCHING TEXT	15 WORDS
	of the Study The general purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of		of the study The general purpose of this research is to enhance our understanding on the influence of	
	<b>SA</b> first.docx (D26939405)			

7/16	SUBMITTED TEXT	13 WORDS	100% MATCHING TEXT	13 WORDS
	Modeling blogger influence in a community. Social Network Analysis and Mining , 139-162.		Modeling blogger influence in a community. Social Network Analysis and Mining, 2(2),	
	<b>SA</b> 2069155_MGT4002P_Dissertation.docx (D26971406)			

8/16	SUBMITTED TEXT	28 WORDS	85% MATCHING TEXT	28 WORDS
	Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. Public Relations Review, 37(1), 90-92.			
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	Imram, N. (1999). The role of visual cues in consumer perception and acceptance of a food product. Nutrition & Food		Imram N: The role of visual cues in consumer perception and acceptance of a food product. Nutr Food	
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Kim, D. (2017). Vlog as a Branding Tool: How to Build a Brand with a Video Blog in Social Media.

Kim, D. (2017). Vlog as a Branding Tool How to Build a Brand with a Video Blog in Social Media, (

**W** [https://fhtm.uitm.edu.my/images/jthca/Vol12Issue1/Chap\\_30.pdf](https://fhtm.uitm.edu.my/images/jthca/Vol12Issue1/Chap_30.pdf)

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The first taste is always with the eyes: A meta-analysis on the neural correlates of processing visual food cues., NeuroImage,

The first taste is always with the eyes: a meta-analysis on the neural correlates of processing visual food cues. Neuroimage, 55,

**W** <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/276305>

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pp. 493-500. Michel, C., Velasco, C., Gatti, E., Spence, C. (2014). A taste of Kandinsky: assessing the influence of the artistic visual presentation of food on the dining experience. Flavour, 3,

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Razak, N. I., & Zulkifly, M. I. (2020). The impacts of food vlog attributes on para-social interaction and customers' response behaviours. Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts, 12(1), 435-445.

Razak, N. I. A., & Zulkifly, M. I. (2020). The impacts of food vlog attributes on para-social interaction and customers' response behaviours. Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts, 12(1), 435-445.

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Snelson, C. (2015). Vlogging about school on YouTube: An exploratory study. *New Media & Society*, 17(3), 321-339.

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Eat With Your Eyes' progresses beyond novelty color - The visual appeal of food and drink with interesting colors, shapes and textures is moving from out-of-home indulgence to home-cooked and healthy food and drink.

Eat With Your Eyes' progresses beyond novelty color - The visual appeal of food and drink with interesting colors, shapes and textures is moving from out-of-home indulgence to home-cooked and healthy food and drink",

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