

CHAPTER II

The Trend of Utilizing Food Content to Promote Restaurants on Instagram

This chapter delineates the trend of utilizing food content as a promotional tool for restaurants via Instagram in Indonesia. It contributes to understanding the impact of food content usage on a restaurant's Instagram account, emphasizing the pertinent data concerning consumer engagement on social media platforms.

1.1 The nature of Food Content on Instagram

Instagram is a media sharing site, a type of social media that allows its users to share visual and audio media. Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide. People use Instagram for various purposes, including seeking information and for business purposes. According to the We Are Social report, the global number of Instagram users reached 1.63 billion as of April 2023. This figure represents a 12.2% increase compared to the previous year. In Indonesia alone, there are 106 million Instagram users as of April 2023, making Indonesia the fourth largest country in terms of Instagram users worldwide.

Instagram provides various content categories that can be searched through hashtags. One of the dominant content categories on Instagram is food content, with the number of posts reaching 524 million in May 2024 (Instagram, 2024). Food content typically refers to any material, such as articles, videos, or social media posts, that pertains to food-related topics. This content can encompass a wide range of subjects, including recipes, cooking techniques, nutritional information, food culture, restaurant reviews, and dietary tips.

In contemporary society, the practice of capturing images of meals before consumption has become almost obligatory, contributing to the widespread phenomenon of sharing food pictures on social media platforms. This trend has garnered significant attention within both culinary and digital spheres. Primarily, human beings are inherently visual creatures, predisposed to respond to captivating aesthetics. Consider, for instance, the visual allure of a perfectly seared steak or the vibrant array of vegetables in a freshly prepared salad. The human sensory apparatus operates synergistically, with the mere visual presentation of such culinary creations eliciting physiological responses, including salivation. Scientific studies affirm the preference of the human brain for visual stimuli, which it processes with remarkable efficiency compared to other forms of sensory input (Kosmyna, N., 2018).

Observing an engaging photograph depicting a meal or beverage has the potential to elicit a multisensory reaction, as visual stimuli can activate neural pathways linked to taste, smell, and memory. The vibrant colors, intricate textures, and nuanced details depicted in such images resonate with the viewer's prior sensory encounters, prompting the brain to simulate the act of consuming the depicted fare. This cognitive simulation, combined with the brain's inclination to associate visual cues with past gustatory experiences, engenders heightened sensations of hunger and anticipation (Milligan, C., 2023)

1.2 How Instagram Affects the Markets of FnB Industry

Social media has transformed the way food integrates into daily life, now becoming a significant aspect shared online. This phenomenon signifies a revolution in the gastronomic and culinary landscape (Allué, 2013). Social media platforms provide a megaphone effect, amplifying the potential audience accessible to ordinary consumers (McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2013). Food-related content consistently garners attention amid the saturated online environment. Through the posting and dissemination of food photos, an online communal experience emerges, fostering a genuine sense of community among users (Bouvier, 2018). Instagram, among these platforms, excels in efficiently disseminating visual rhetoric to its 500 million daily active users on both personal and global scales (Statista, 2018). Positioned as a platform for interpersonal communication on a global level, Instagram was conceived as a means for users to swiftly and enjoyably share their experiences through a series of images (Collard, 2012, p. 47). It is imperative to acknowledge the user-centric concept underlying Instagram's functionality, where the widespread sharing of photos constitutes a fundamental aspect of the platform.

1.3 The importance of restaurant's user engagement on social media

Social media has emerged as a crucial marketing tool within the restaurant industry, exerting influence on both restaurant selection and competitiveness (Singh, S., 2022). A survey conducted among 5000 British consumers in 2022 highlighted that 48% utilized social media platforms to inform their decisions regarding food and beverage establishments (Seo, J., 2024). Organizations

leveraging social media platforms aim to enhance customer-business relationships, boost website traffic, identify new business prospects, gather post-sales feedback, increase purchase intent, and fortify their brand identity and equity (Kamboj, S., 2018). Despite the recognition of social media's significance in maintaining customer engagement by restaurant managers (DiPietro, R.B., 2012), many operators lack proficiency in digital marketing strategies and resort to trial and error (Roy, A., 2016). While existing research predominantly examines the impact of social media on customer behavior within the restaurant industry, there remains a dearth of studies focusing on how managerial performance can be enhanced through adept utilization of these platforms.