

## *Growing popularity and impact of food-related visual and social media content*

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### **Abstract**

*Food is not only seen as a basic necessity, but is also being seen as a way of lifestyle. It is now not only made and eaten, but also watched. This research attempts to study the increase in the growth of viewership as well as production of food/culinary related content. The paper also analyses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on food media. In order to find supporting data to prove the above, an online survey was conducted among those aged between 13 - 50 and above. The sample size taken for the study is 375, using convenience sampling and snowballing techniques. The results of which provide answers to why people have been watching food media increasingly. It also identifies the exact set of population who consume food media the most. The research also further examines the presence of food in the industries of film, social media, reality TV shows and OTT (Over The Top) platforms. The study ultimately proved that there is an increase in the food and culinary related content consumption as well as production. Moreover, it also highlights that the increase has been exponentially greater during and after the 2020 pandemic, as people have been more interested in the topic and are actively participating in creating it too.*

**Keywords:** *Food Media, Culinary Media, Food-Related Content, Visual Media, Social Media, Food, Covid-19 Pandemic, Films, Reality TV Shows, Foodies, Television, OTT, Food Porn.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

On the 31st of December 2019, there was the first report of the ongoing crisis of the novel coronavirus. It was first reported in Wuhan, China which rapidly spread all across the world. By March of 2020, the whole world was almost completely shut down, as we all called it a 'lockdown'. Every person from across age groups and across the world were stuck at home with nothing to do but just keep them safe and healthy. This was the point of time when social media trends started with people showing interest in cooking, and trends coming up regarding food, quirky dishes, recipes etc.

At a point of time a rise in food related content was seen in one's social media feed and also on the audio-visual media as a whole. This food content boom on the feed and the growing trends all around surrounding food and culinary is the reason why the researcher took a call to do an elaborate research on the same. The researcher looks to find if there was a continuous growth in the food related content or was this a sudden boom and also the reason behind food being used as the centre point for all of these.

Predominantly, as of 2021, when almost the whole world is locked in their houses for their safety, it is the internet or the visual media that is keeping them sane at least to a certain degree. The visual media has the potential to empower any type of content and make it a part of itself and the same has been achieved with food too. So this research is to find out those reasons and statistics as to why food is consumed so much more on the internet than from the plate. Who are the people that are consuming food related content and why are they consuming? Are the productions of food related content increased in number as well as value? Thus to find the answers to these questions, this research is being conducted.

### ***Research Objectives***

- To examine the growth of food media in visual and social media.
- To assess reasons for the increase in viewership.
- To study the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Media.
- To identify specifically which demographic consumes the most amount of food media.
- Study the role of food in:
  - Film industry
  - Reality TV Show industry
  - Social Media industry
  - OTT (Over The Top) industry

### ***Research Questions***

- What are the reasons for increased viewership in food media?
- How much has food media grown over the years?
- Which demographic is most prone to consume food media?
- Has there been an impact on Food Media during the Pandemic?

### ***REVIEW OF LITERATURE***

Food on television has a history that predates television itself. Food's enduring presence on television has been iterative yet diverse, ranging from segmented on-air cooking demos and educational "how-to" programmes to celebrity-infused food competitions and narrowcasting lifestyle television for the foodie niche. A meteoric rise in contemporary food television is based on this rich history of programming. Food Network, a cable channel in the United States, debuted in 1993. Its acquisition by E. W. Scripps Company in 1997, and subsequent rise in popularity, is widely regarded as one of the catalysts for a renewed and concentrated investment in food programming. Although it began in niche cable and broadcasting markets in the mid-to-late 1990s, an increased emphasis on food has made televisuality pervasive in the first decade of the twenty-first century [1].

The Second World War was a watershed moment for many advancements in food media. While recipes and nutritional advice have been around for as long as the written word has, it is fair to say that in the decades since the war, food's media presence has

grown in lockstep with media advances. Despite the fact that magazines had been printing recipes for housewives for many years, it is not surprising that people were more interested in food during and after the war, given its scarcity during those years[2].

A scene related to eating is depicted in one of the Lumière brothers' first moving pictures, taken in their family garden in the spring of 1895 (i.e. before the cinematograph was introduced to the general public). Aside from the nature of the meal, the film unquestionably focuses on food. As a result, the subject of eating made its way onto the big screen [3]. Another pivotal point in the history of cinematic food representations occurred in the 1980s, with the advent of what some academics refer to as a completely new genre: the food film. This term refers to a category of films in which food and eating are not only visible on screen, but also play an important role in the narrative and narration: they define the characters and their relationships, convey feelings, and define the world depicted in the film [3].

Scholars have used the various components of foodways to view films and illuminate cultural complexities in films from the silent period to the Hollywood studio era, foreign art cinema, and contemporary mainstream film. They have taken into account narrative developments involving the design and preservation of the recipes, food supplies and food. Food clean-up was analysed to show that experience can establish a connection between personalities, often noticeably absent in mainstream Hollywood movies [4].

Food Network has evolved culinary television from the instructional demonstrations of PBS's *The French Chef* with Julia Child to interactive programming about the relationship between food and culture, international travel, adventure, homemaking, entertainment and competition. The belief that cooking is cool and that it is a hobby [4]. The first food blog with the name Chowhound was created and published in the USA in 1997. This was an online bulletin board where people could share suggestions for the best places to eat in New York. It's hard to count the number of food blogs and platforms on social media sites where people talk about food nowadays, in 2014 [5]. The food media industry is about much more than entertainment and the enjoyment of food through others. Our mucked relationship with food takes the form of an addiction to its representation: we can't get enough of it. Food is a byproduct of modern media culture and a symbol of cosmopolitan ideals [4].

Electronic devices, web content, and information and communication technology have quietly colonised the world of food in recent years. Media content has also undergone significant changes [6]. Food is a modern medium in a social and cultural context that is becoming increasingly orthorexic, creating a new understanding relationship between man and food and converting it into a true new religion or simulacrum. Published in *The Guardian*, titled "Let's start the foodie backlash" (2012), Poole writes: "We are living in the Age of Food. Cookery programs bloat the television schedules, cookbooks strain the bookshop tables, celebrity chefs hawk their own brands in the supermarket, and cook in super-expensive restaurants from Chicago to Copenhagen are the subject of hagiographic profiles in serious magazines and newspapers[7]

Scripps-owned food programming reached an estimated 99 million US households in 2013 and continues to be popular with young affluent consumers who are interested in arts and leisure, but most importantly, have access to disposable income. Today, nearly every major network has a food-related programme, ranging from Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* to Bravo's *Top Chef* Spike's *Bar Rescue* to Netflix's *Chef's Table*. Food programming has even taken the place of popular soap operas and talk shows on daytime network television [8].

With so much enthusiasm for culinary culture, it is remarkable that Americans' cooking time has decreased over the last fifty years. Nonetheless, the amount of time

Americans spend watching food media is increasing [9]. Our interactions with food have become more vicarious as it has become more mediated. As a result, there is an experiential estrangement from food, which fuels the need for more food media and food personalities, some of whom assume the role of new authorities on how to live. According to statistics from 2006, the Food Network channel—which is available in 155 countries worldwide—reaches 89 million homes in the United States, and its website receives 6 million unique visitors per month. With these figures, food channels have become the ideal platforms for the production of celebrity chefs and the transformation of food into a spectator sport [10].

As food and cooking knowledge became more important in American culture, producers of cooking shows saw an opportunity to create more interesting programmes [11].

Food and cooking came to be associated with a sense of self. Food's role evolved from a mere necessity to a means of self-expression and a visible lifestyle accessory [4]. Indeed, food media has become so important in expressing mainstream food politics that it now influences media and food industry practices, as well as marketing strategies for both "alternative" and "conventional" food items [12]. Food images and representations of food behaviors have been studied to shed light on characters' inner experiences, dramatic conflicts, narrative developments, a story's social circumstances, and the underlying mood or point of view of a film. Food and film writing reveals that scenes involving food consumption are especially useful for determining power dynamics between characters. According to research, scenes of food performance are frequently used to mark important stages in character dynamics. Food in film scholarship has already demonstrated that images of food and food behavior are woven into the *mise en scène* and narrative design of films in ways that shape viewers' understanding and interpretation of characters and their interactions, the social dynamics explored in a narrative, and the ideological perspectives conveyed by a film [13].

Food representations on social media, especially in the form of images, have raised awareness of the global food supply, distribution, and consumption chain. Food photography websites and blogs have also sprung up as a result of pop culture's obsession with food's aesthetics, as well as its social and cultural construction [14]. Those who enjoy food but do not want to endure the negative effects of overeating can fulfil their cravings by watching mukbang, which allows them to feel satiation and vicarious feeding. Those suffering from various eating disorders (e.g., anorexia nervosa, binge eating) watch mukbang to help them resolve their difficulties with eating and food intake, while some hospital patients who are unable to consume their preferred foods (e.g., unhealthy fast food) watch mukbang to satisfy their hunger. It could be argued that watching mukbang will provide social gratification through the association and affective bonding with other mukbangers or people who watch mukbang.

An insatiable social appetite for food-related subjects can lead to the success and popularity of digital food photos, with a growing variety of culinary programmes ranging from food-blogging courses to the advent of professional culinary photography. The need to capture a moment is so intense that many people find it difficult to fully appreciate a meal without the added assurance that the mouth-watering anticipation of the first bite can be re-lived by the Instagrammer later and elicit "likes" from friends and strangers alike. Food-related organisations quickly joined social media as a result of our shared passion for food. There are members from all sectors of the food industry, as well as large and small retailers, politicians, educators, food institutions, manufacturers, and food lovers. To our knowledge, no one has ever considered how social media is used in the food industry [15].

**Research Gap**

Many researchers previously have studied the evolution of cooking shows on Television, increased food related movies and food trends on social media. This research paper wishes to find out reasons behind people getting addicted to watching food related content. Studies before mainly focussed on the traditional TV but in this research paper, the causes of growth in food related content on OTT platforms will be discussed along with the surge in the growth of food media during the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper will also identify which demographic of the population are the most receptive to food/culinary related content which hasn't been studied in the existing literature.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary goal of this research is to identify if there has been a growth in the culinary or food related content on the audio-visual media and if it impacts the people who consume it in any way. The research also looks to find out how the advent of different mediums of audio-visual media impacted the production level and size and how if one medium is overpowering the others. The mediums referred to here are OTT, social media, TV and theatres (Feature films).

There are many other studies which are mentioned in the Review of Literature which have dealt with similar topics addressing the topics related to Growth of Food Media, Food in films, social media and TV shows and such. However, this research acts as an addition to those with a more specific purpose of finding if there is growth and if yes, the reasons for this growth in production and consumption of these content.

In this study, the researcher focuses on people spread among the world, specifically Indians in and across the world. The sample collected are of 375 people, belonging to the range of people from the ages of 13 to 50 and above.

**Sampling technique**

For this research, the sampling technique used is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling represents a group of sampling techniques that help researchers to select units from a population that they are interested in studying. The sample that the researcher tests is made up of all of these units put together ([16]. For the

convenience of this research, the researcher has used Convenience sampling of non-probability sampling techniques. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling method where

the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach, whereas, Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, this term refers to a group of sampling techniques that rely on the researcher's judgement when selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organizations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied [16]. The researcher has used convenience sampling to gather the samples from the most easily accessible population for the researcher.

In order to reach out to the respondents across the world for accumulating the sample, the researcher has used the research design of questionnaires which was circulated through WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Instagram.

**Sample Size**

Sample size is the term used in a research for defining the number of subjects or respondents included in a sample. This refers to the number of items selected from the universe to constitute



a sample [17]. In this study the sample size is 375 respondents, who are Indians from across the world, specifically the researcher's contacts and mutuals.

### ***Research Design***

In this study, the researcher uses quantitative methods of research. [18] describe quantitative research as an investigation into a social issue and explain phenomena or events by gathering numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods like for example in particular statistics. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample.

### ***Questionnaire Design***

Online survey was used as the main research technique. According to "Introduction to Using Online Surveys", online surveys work best in a situation where a list of potential respondents is known to have emails and Internet access, and it is especially useful when the target respondents are geographically dispersed [19]. Here, since the study is about blogging which is an activity carried out by internet users, online surveys are best suited for collecting responses. A structured questionnaire was used that contained both open ended and closed ended questions. The online questionnaire was designed with the help of Google Forms, the link to which was sent to the respondents via email, blogging platforms and social networking sites.

However, the researcher has also used qualitative data gathered through descriptive answers, since it doesn't limit the respondents to a predefined answer and gives them the space to express their opinions.

### ***Tools for Data Collection***

A researcher requires numerous data – gathering tools or techniques. The data for completing the research was collected from people of the age category of 13-50 and above years. For this study,

a questionnaire, formulated by using Google Forms, comprising 15 questions. The collected data from the respondents through questionnaires were statistically analysed, using Google Sheets.

Tables and charts were used to ensure that data could be interpreted quickly and easily. The percentages were used to represent the responses. The accuracy of the data from the completed questionnaire was tested. A word cloud was used in order to visually understand the words most used in the open ended question. This approach was chosen because it is the most effective tool for identifying, comparing, describing, and arriving at a conclusion.

### ***DATA ANALYSIS***

The main objective of the study was to learn the general population's stance on various sides of consuming food media irrespective of demographic aspects. By targeting a certain demographic's population, the researcher conducted a comparison study between the different demographics in order to identify which specific part of the population is the most sensitive to consuming food media in order to find the reason behind the progress of the food media industry.

All the information that is gathered for the study to answer the research questions and to meet the objectives of the study, are thoroughly analyzed and interpreted. This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from people across the world, across different demographics, through questionnaires.

Google forms were used to create the questionnaires and were circulated to the contact of the researcher through WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn from which the researcher got 375 responses, making her sample size a value of 375 people from across the world. The questionnaire is attached to the appendix.

Responses from the survey are emphasized using various forms of graphical representations and simple percentage analysis is done to analyze and further describe the data. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed and interpreted in this segment.

#### 4.1. Consumption of Food Media

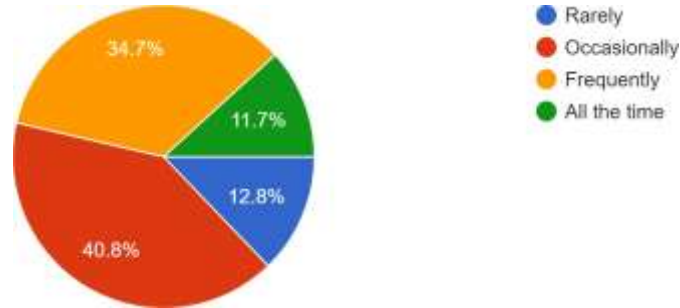


Figure 4.2.1. Consumption of Food Media.

The figure 4.2.1 shows the data collected as to how often one consumes food/ culinary related media. A strong majority of 40.8% of the overall respondents consume this genre of content on an occasional basis. Whereas a strong majority of 34.7% consume such content frequently, this number along with the 11.7% of people show that together they make a significant amount of impact on the consumption of this type of content, which in turn create a tough majority; and only 12.8% of respondents rarely consume this content. This graph acts as a direct representation of the stance chosen in this paper, where a tough majority have been drawn into consuming food or culinary related content.

Table 4.2.1

Consumption of Food Media in Different Genders.

Gender	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	All the time
Female	11.3%	36.4%	39%	13.4%
Male	15.3%	47.9%	27.8%	9%

The table above clearly indicates that the female respondents consume more food media than that of the male population. Females are seen to watch food media around 12% more frequently than that of males. While only 9% of males consume food media all the time, females consume the same over 4% more.

Table 4.2.2

Consumption of Food Media in Different Occupations.

Occupation	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	All the time
Student	12.8%	35.3%	35.3%	16.5%
Employed	13.4%	52.7%	29.5%	4.5%
Unemployed	11.1%	37.8%	44.4%	6.7%

According to table 4.2.2, the student and unemployed population consume more food/culinary media than that of the employed population. While only 29.5% of the employed respondents consume food media frequently, the student and unemployed respondents exceed the number by around 5% and 15% respectively. The student demographic tops the other two demographics of respondents by over 10% when it comes to them watching food media all the time.

Table 4.2.3

Consumption of Food Media in Different Age Groups.

Age	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	All the time
13-30	13.1%	34.5%	36.7%	15.6%
31-50	7.5%	62.5%	30%	0%
50+	15%	55%	28.3%	1.7%

In the 13-30 age group we see that the majority of the people consume food related media frequently, only a meger percentage of 13.1% of people have responded that they rarely consume this type of media. In the 31-50 age group 0% have said they consume it all the time, this number is much less in comparison to those in the 13-30 age group with 15.6% saying they consume it all the time. By studying this data, it is evident that the 13-30 age group are more indulgent in food related media as the majority have selected that they consume this media frequently and 14% more than the 50+ age group have selected 'all the time'.

Table 4.2.4

Consumption of Food Media in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	All the time
Foodie	8.9%	35.6%	41.5%	14.1%
Not Foodie	22.9%	54.3%	17.1%	5.7%

From the above table we see that the majority of foodies have said that they 'frequently' consume food related media, whereas the majority of non foodies have said that they 'occasionally' consume food related media. 8% more of the foodies have also said that they consume food related media all the time.



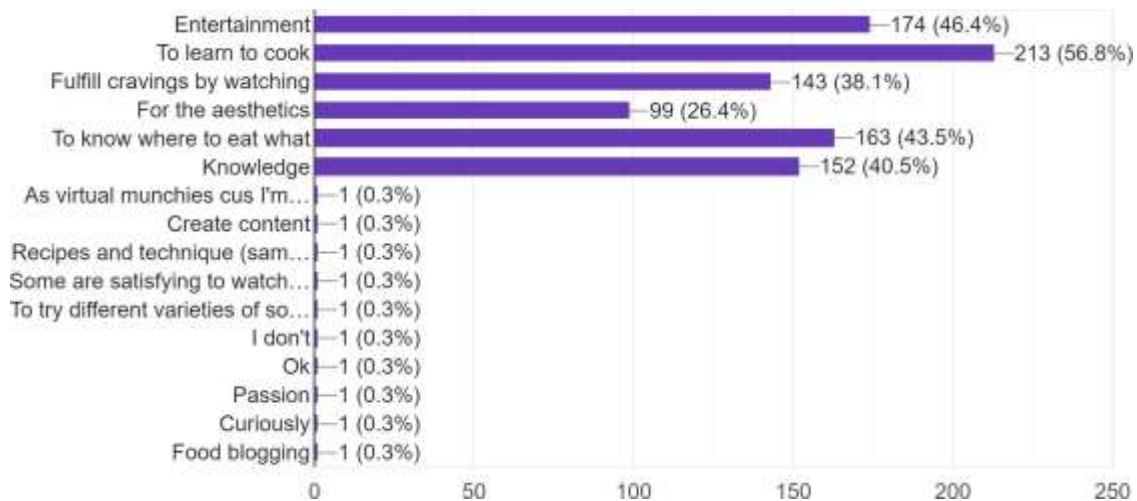


Figure 4.2.2. Reasons for Consuming Food Media.

The figure 4.2.2 asks the question as to why one consumes food media brought out a plethora of responses from the respondents. 56.8% of respondents watch this genre of content for the purpose of learning the skill of cooking, followed by 46.4% of the respondents watching the content for entertainment. Other responses include 43.5% of the respondents consuming such content to understand where and what to eat, and 40.5% of the respondents watching it for the knowledge they gain. Only a small percentage of the respondents consume food media for fulfilling their cravings or for the aesthetics, that is 38.1% and 26.4% of the total respondents. A percentage of 0.3 was shared amongst several responses such as consuming food media for passion, curiosity, recipes or even food blogging. Irrespective of the reason, the graph helps understand the consumption pattern and need of media amongst people.

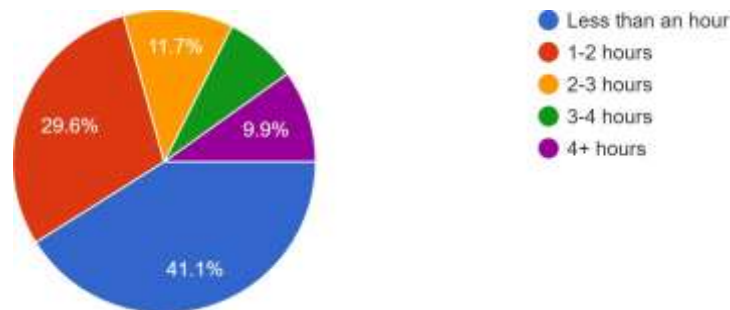


Figure 4.2.3. Screen Time of Watching Food Related Content.

The above graph 4.2.3 evidently shows that 41.4% of people watch food related content for less than an hour. However 29.6% of respondents watch this content anytime between 1-2 hours. 11.7% of respondents watch the same content for about 2-3 hours and 7.7% of respondents dedicate 3-4 hours of their time to culinary content. The other 9.9% watch culinary content for more than 4 hours a day. Considering anything more than an hour spent on food-related content as passion and desire to watch this content, gives a hefty majority of respondents who watch this content for the sheer pleasure and entertainment it provides for its viewers, which in turn proves that off late people have been drawn into watching content related to food.

Table 4.2.5

Screen Time of Watching Food Related Content in Different Occupations.

Occupation	Less than an hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4+ hours
<b>Student</b>	39.4%	28.9%	11.5%	7.8%	12.4%
<b>Employed</b>	44.6%	26.8%	14.3%	8%	6.3%
<b>Unemployed</b>	40%	40%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%

As seen in table 4.2.5, the demographic that dedicates the least amount of screen time on food media is the employed category with 44.6% of the respondents choosing the less than an hour option. The employed demographic also constitutes the least amount of population in watching food media for more than 4 hours. The exact opposite is seen in the student demographic as they constitute double than the employed and unemployed demographic when it comes to people watching food media for more than 4 hours in a week with over 12% respondents.

Table 4.2.6

Screen Time of Watching Food Related Content in Different Age Groups.

Age	Less than an hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4+ hours
<b>13-30</b>	37.8%	28.7%	14.2%	8.7%	10.5%
<b>31-50</b>	47.5%	32.5%	5%	7.5%	7.5%
<b>50+</b>	51.7%	31.7%	5%	3.3%	8.3%

From the above table it is evident that just over half of the 50+ population spend less than an hour a week for screen time on food related content. The other half are distributed all across the other time frames with the least dedicating 3-4 hours. Although the majority for the other two age categories spend less than an hour as well, we see that 10.5% of the 13-30 year olds spend 4+ hours on food content, nearly over 2% more than 50+ category, demonstrating that it is people of this category that spend more time screening food related content when compared to the other age categories.

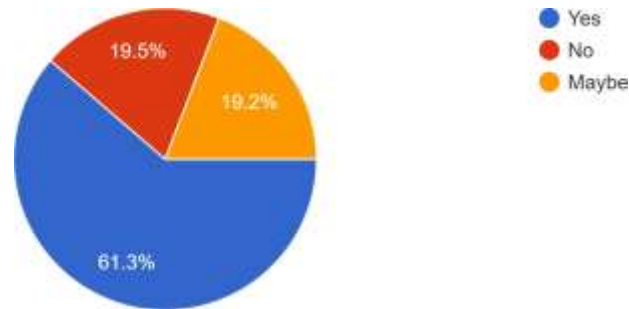
Table 4.2.7

Screen Time of Watching Food Related Content in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	Less than an hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4+ hours
Foodie	30.7%	34.4%	13.7%	9.3%	11.9%
Not Foodie	67.6%	17.1%	6.7%	3.8%	4.8%

While it is no surprise that the majority of the non-foodies have said they spend less than an hour a week watching food related content, the majority in the foodie group fall in the 1-2 hours a week category. 7% more of the foodies have said that they spend 4+ hours a week watching food related content.

#### 4.2. Growth of Food Media



**Figure 4.3.1. Consumption of Food Media Over the Years.**

The graph 4.3.1 clearly answers the base question sought after in this paper, as to whether the amount of food media consumed by the respondents have increased or decreased over the years. A whopping 61.3% of the respondents believe that the consumption of food related content has vastly increased over the years and 19.5% of the respondents believe that not a lot has changed over the years in the consumption pattern of food related content. However 19.2% of the respondents are unsure as to whether there has been a change in their consumption of culinary content over the years. This graph helps understand the inclination towards food content over the years, which in turn helps understand a strong point trying to be made through this paper.

*Table 4.3.1*

Consumption of Food Media Over the Years in Different Genders.

Gender	Yes	No	Maybe
Female	66.2%	14.7%	19%
Male	53.5%	27.1%	19.4%

The data above signifies that around 13% more females compared to male respondents agree that their consumption of food media has increased over the years, whereas 13% more male respondents disagree that their indulgence in food media has been increasing. There is also a mere consensus between the two genders when it comes to being unsure of the same question.

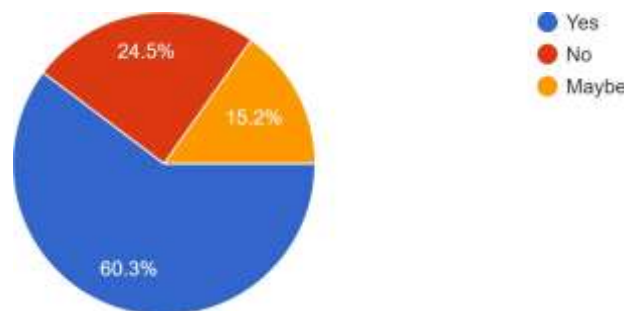


Figure 4.3.2. Consumption of Food Media During the Pandemic.

Figure 4.3.2 questions the respondents about their consumption of food media and if it has increased during the course of the pandemic. 60.3% of the respondents believe that their consumption of food media went through an ascent during the pandemic. However 24.5% of respondents believe that the pandemic had no impact on their consumption of food media. 15.2% of the total respondents however stated that they are confused as to whether or not the pandemic affected their overall consumption of food related content. This figure helps us understand the steady incline of food media consumption by people over the years.

Table 4.3.2

Consumption of Food Media During the Pandemic in Different Genders.

Gender	Yes	No	Maybe
Female	66.7%	18.2%	15.2%
Male	50%	34.7%	15.3%

As seen in table 4.3.2, around 16% more female respondents than men have been consuming more food media than usual during the pandemic, while the male population disagrees with the same approximately 16% more than that of the female respondents. Almost the same proportion of female and male respondents remain unsure if the pandemic changed their food media viewing patterns.

Table 4.3.3

Consumption of Food Media During the Pandemic in Different Occupations.

Occupation	Yes	No	Maybe
Student	67.4%	17%	15.6%
Employed	52.7%	33.9%	13.4%
Unemployed	44.4%	37.8%	17.8%

As per table 4.3.3, a clear majority of all three demographics agree that they started consuming more food media than usual during the pandemic with the highest being the student demographic with 67.4% of the population agreeing to the same which is still 15% and 23% more than that of the employed and unemployed demographic respectively.

Table 4.3.4.

Consumption of Food Media During the Pandemic in Different Age Groups.

Age	Yes	No	Maybe
13-30	66.5%	18.9%	14.5%
31-50	47.5%	47.5%	5%
50+	40%	35%	25%

It is evident from the above data that the majority of the young adult age group have said that their consumption of food related content has increased during the pandemic. 35% of the 50+ age group have said that they do not find themselves consuming more food related content during the pandemic, this is 16% more than the same response from the 13-30 age category, with only 18%

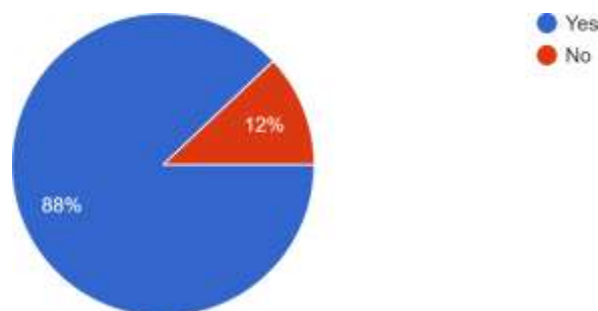
saying the same. It seems to be that the young adult category found themselves consuming more food related content during the pandemic when compared to those of the other two categories.

*Table 4.3.5*

Consumption of Food Media During the Pandemic in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	Yes	No	Maybe
Foodie	65.2%	19.6%	15.2%
Not Foodie	47.6%	37.1%	15.2%

While 65% of the foodies have said that they have found themselves consuming more food related media during the pandemic the majority of the non foodies, that is 47% have also said the same. But 18% more non-foodies have selected 'no'.



**Figure 4.3.3. Increase in Productions of Food Related Content.**

From the figure 4.3.3 it can be inferred that a winning margin of 88% believes that there has been an increase in the number of productions related to food and culinary. Whereas only 12% believe that there hasn't been an increase in the content being produced. This figure evidently

states that most respondents think that food related content has increased over the years which shows us the growth of such content and the impact they have made over the minds of its consumers.

*Table 4.3.6*

Consumption of Food Media Over the Years in Different Age Groups.

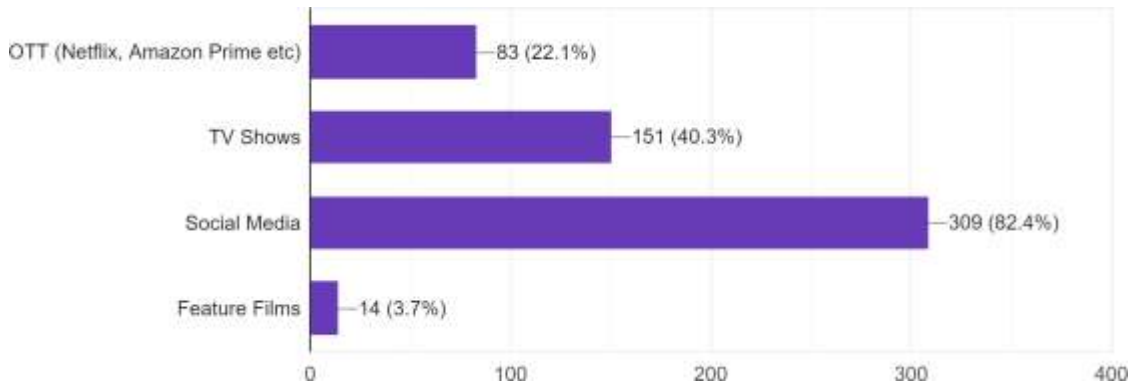
Age	Yes	No	Maybe
13-30	63.6%	17.5%	18.9%
31-50	75%	15%	10%
50+	41.7%	31.7%	26.7%

75% (3/4th) of the middle aged category have said that their consumption of food related content has increased over the years, followed by the 13-30 age category with 63% saying the same. 31% of the people in the 50+ category have said that their consumption of food related content has not increased over the years, which constitutes the majority for this category. It is evident from the above data that the consumption of food related content over the years has increased the most amongst the middle aged population (31-50) then followed by the young adults (13-30) which leaves the old aged (50+) population with least growth in change of consumption of food related content over the years.

### 4.3. Food on Social Media

Several platforms are used by people to find and watch content. When asked about where one watches content related to food, referring to the graph 4.2.3, a large majority of 82.4% prefer or use the different types of social media platforms to keep up with the culinary content produced.

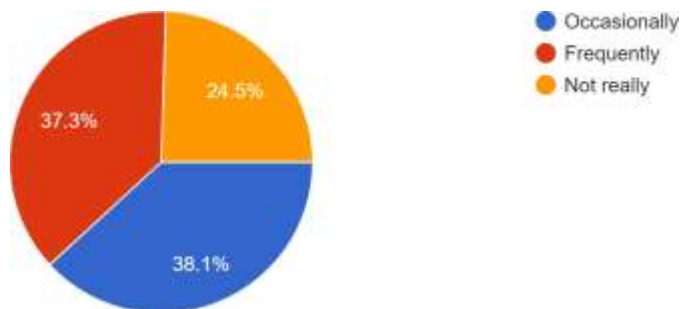
40.3% of respondents follow food related content on TV shows or channels that focus on food related topics. 22.1% of respondents watch this content on OTT platforms and a mere 3.7% of respondents watch this content in feature films. Through this graph one can analyze that most people tend to watch food related content on social media, which in turn proves the impact made by such content on different types of social media in various ways.



**Figure 4.4.1. Platforms Preferred to Watch Food Related Content.**

Several platforms are used by people to find and watch content. When asked about where one watches content related to food, referring to the graph 4.4.1, a large majority of 82.4% prefer or use the different types of social media platforms to keep up with the culinary content produced. 40.3% of respondents follow food related content on TV shows or channels that focus on food related topics. 22.1% of respondents watch this content on OTT platforms and a mere 3.7% of respondents watch this content in feature films. Through this graph one can analyze that most people tend to watch food related content on social media, which in turn proves the impact made by such content on different types of social media in various ways.





**Figure 4.4.2. Food Related Content Suggestions on Social Media.**

The figure 4.2.7 evidently shows that 38.1% of respondents believe that their recommendations or feed occasionally consists of content related to food. Whereas 37.3% of respondents think that culinary content shows up on their feed frequently, and only a small percentage of respondents that is 24.5% think that food related content hardly ever shows up on their feed. Referring to figure 4.2.6, it is clear that content consumed by people does not usually pertain to one’s subscriptions to food channels or pages, but rather a large portion of content consumption comes from the recommendations, which in turn talks about the growth and emergence of food related content so several viewed platforms.

*Table 4.4.1*  
Food Related Content Suggestions on Social Media in Different Genders.

Gender	Occasionallly	Frequently	Not really
Female	37.7%	40.7%	21.6%
Male	38.9%	31.9%	29.2%

The above table suggests that while both genders almost agree that food related content only occasionally pop up in their social media pages recommendations or explore page, almost 9%

more female respondents than male respondents agree that food related content suggestions are seen more frequently on their social media feeds.

*Table 4.4.2*  
Food Related Content Suggestions on Social Media in Different Occupations.

Occupation	Occasionallly	Frequently	Not really
Student	35.3%	43.6%	21.1%
Employed	42%	31.3%	26.8%
Unemployed	42.2%	22.2%	35.6%

Table 4.4.2 suggests that a majority of 43.6% student respondents agree that their YouTube recommendations or Instagram Explore often have food related suggestions only which is around 12% and 21% more than that of the employed and unemployed respondents respectively.

Table 4.4.3

Food Related Content Suggestions on Social Media in Different Age Groups.

Age	Occasionally	Frequently	Not really
13-30	35.3%	44.4%	20.4%
31-50	50%	20%	30%
50+	43.3%	16.7%	40%

While half of the middle age group (31-50) have said that they are ‘occasionally’ only exposed to food related content through their social media recommendations, 44% of the 13-30 age group

have said that they are ‘frequently’ exposed. While the majority of 50+ year olds have said ‘occasionally’, the close second response is ‘not really’ for this age category.

Table 4.4.4

Food Related Content Suggestions on Social Media in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	Occasionally	Frequently	Not really
Foodie	40.4%	44.1%	15.6%
Not Foodie	32.4%	20%	47.6%

While 44% in the foodie section have said that they frequently get food recommendations on their social media pages, 47% of the non-foodies have said that they do not. According to this data it is clear that the foodies are more exposed to food related content than their counterparts, the non foodies.

#### 4.4. Viewer Commitment

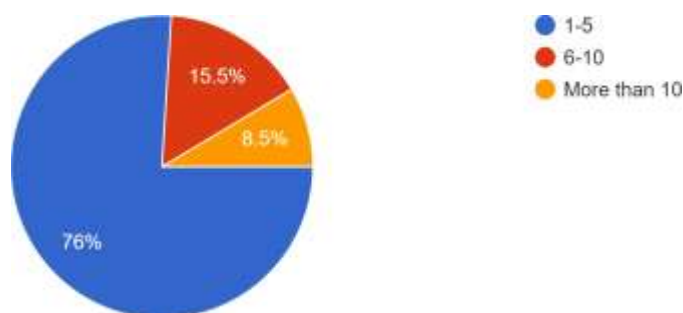


Figure 4.5.1. Number of Food Related Pages/ Channels Followed.

According to figure 4.5.1. a very tiny percentage of respondents, that is 8.5% are subscribed to more than 10 food producing content pages. 15.5% are subscribed to at least 6-10 food related content pages or channels, and a huge majority of 76% follow only 1-5 food producing content pages or channels. This shows us that even though a strong majority don't seem to be subscribed to many food producing channels, some of them consist of the same majority of people who watch a lot of food related content. This

proves to us that only subscription based content is not the content that is being consumed, but a lot of content usually shows up on one's recommendations or even just their feed.

*Table 4.5.1*

Number of Food Related Pages/ Channels Followed in Different Age Groups.

Age	1-5	6-10	More than 10
13-30	73.1%	17.5%	9.5%
31-50	82.5%	7.5%	10%
50+	85%	11.7%	3.3%

From the above table we see that the majority of all the age groups lie in the 1-5 range in relation to the number of food related content channels they follow. Whereas in the 'more than 10' category the highest number of people is the 31-50 age group followed by the 13-30 age group with just 0.5% less number of people. It is evident that in comparison to the 50+ age group the other two age groups subscribe to more food related content.

*Table 4.5.2*

Number of Food Related Pages/ Channels Followed in Different Occupations.

Occupation	1-5	6-10	More than 10
Student	72.5%	17.4%	10.1%
Employed	88.9%	4.4%	6.7%
Unemployed	77.7%	16.1%	6.3%

While the majority of all three demographics follow 1-5 food related pages/channels/series, the student population still tops the more than 10 category by around 4%. The employed population took a big dip in the 6-10 category lagging by around 12-13% behind the unemployed and student demographic.

*Table 4.5.3*

Number of Food Related Pages/ Channels Followed in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	1-5	6-10	More than 10
Foodie	71.5%	17.8%	10.7%
Not Foodie	87.6%	9.5%	2.9%

The majority of the non foodies that is 87% have said that they follow 1-5 pages related to food content on their social media, the majority for the foodie section also fall into this category. 7.8% more of the foodies however, have said that they follow more than 10 pages of this type of content.

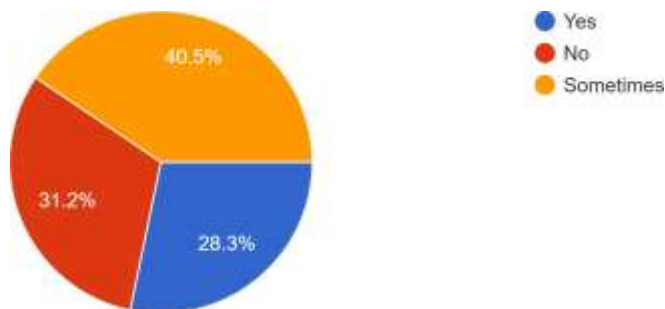


Figure 4.5.2. Keeping Up with New Food Related Releases.

The data stated in the figure 4.5.2 states the responses provided by people when questioned as to whether or not they consciously keep up with food media, to which 40.5% of respondents answered that they keep up with such content occasionally or sometimes. Whereas 31.2% of people say that they don't keep up with content being put out consciously, and 28.3% of respondents actively keep up with the content being produced. This graph represents the impact made by food media. Although a large majority does not actively or consciously keep up with content that's being produced in this genre, few of these people belong to the majority that actually consumes a lot of food media, which in turn helps us understand the visibility such content has gotten over the years and it's overall growth.

*Table 4.5.4*  
Keeping Up with New Food Related Releases in Different Age Groups.

Age	Yes	No	Sometimes
13-30	26.2%	30.2%	43.6%
31-50	37.5%	40%	22.5%
50+	31.7%	30%	38.3%

While 37% of the 31-50 age group people have said that they consciously keep up with new food releases nearly the same number of people (30%) from both the other age groups have said that they do not. The majority of the 13-30 age group have said that they sometimes keep up with new releases.

*Table 4.5.5*  
Keeping Up with New Food Related Releases in Foodies and Non-Foodies.

Interest	Yes	No	Sometimes
Foodie	33.3%	23.7%	43%
Not Foodie	15.2%	50.5%	34.3%

From the above table we can see that half of the non-foodies do not keep up with new food releases. While the majority (43%) of foodies have said that they sometimes keep up with the releases, a close second of 33% have said that they do, this means that 18% more foodies keep up with the new food releases when compared to the non-foodies.

Table 4.5.6

Foodies in Different Age Groups.

Age	Yes	No
13-30	76.7%	23.3%
31-50	67.5%	32.5%
50+	53.3%	46.7%

From the above table we can concur that just over 50% of the 50+ respondents have said they identify as foodies. This means that over 23% more people in the 13-30 age category identify

themselves as foodies when compared to those in the 50+ category. It is clear that there exist more foodies in the 13-30 category than compared to the 31-50 and 50+ category.

#### 4.5. Reasons for Watching Food/Culinary Related Content

The survey circulated among 375 respondents contained 12 questions among which one of them was an optional open ended question only to people who found themselves watching and scrolling through food/culinary related content in a loop. Out of the 375 respondents 206 people answered the question. The aim of analysing 206 responses to the question is to find out the reasons behind being trapped in a loop of watching food/culinary related content.

The reasons behind scrolling through food/culinary related content for a long time may be subjective to each respondent, but the researcher here aims to find the most common reasons and patterns in the responses.

The figure below showcases the most frequently used terms in the open ended responses in the form of a word cloud. A word cloud is a unique visual representation of text data that is often used to display keyword metadata to visualise free-form text. Tags are normally single words, with the font size indicating the value of the word. This format is helpful for easily recognising the most important words and determining their relative importance. A larger sized term carries more weight.



**Figure 4.6. Word Cloud of the Most Frequent Terms Used.**

Apart from the most important single terms used by the respondents, figure 4.6 below displays multi term words used by a number of respondents along with the number of times a particular term was used among the 206 respondents when asked the question “If you're a person who finds yourself watching and scrolling through food/culinary related content in a loop, why do you think you continue to do so even if you don't have intentions of trying out the recipes yourself?”

*Table 4.6*

## Terms Used in the Descriptive Answer

Term	Number of Times Used
Satisfying	31
Aesthetic	20
Try New Recipes	19
Cravings	18
Knowledge	16
Entertaining	16
Explore	15
To Learn	13
Interesting	12
New Techniques	8
Fun	7
Live Vicariously	6
To Watch the Process	6
Curious	5
Calming	5
Time Pass	4
Addiction	4
Happiness	3
Cannot Afford	3
To Cook	3
Love Cooking	3
Tempting	3
Relaxing	3



Food Porn	2
ASMR	2
Hobby	2
Pleasure	2
Lighten Mood	2
Therapeutic	2
Soothing	2
Stress Buster	2
Informative	1
Motivation	1
Captivating	1
Guilty Pleasure	1
Irresistible	1
Positivity	1
Love Food	1

All the terms from table 4.6 can be listed as reasons why people consume media. The most evident reason being that most people watch food/culinary related content because it is satisfying, aesthetically pleasing and to try out new recipes. The other terms also indicate that watching such content helps in calming down their mood as watching such content is therapeutic, relaxing, soothing and is a form of stress buster. A number of respondents also concurred that watching the process of a dish being made from scratch to the final product gives a feeling of gratification.

Another common response from a few respondents is that they watch food related videos to live vicariously through the videos as they cannot experience it themselves due to the pandemic or budget and availability constraints. The respondents indicated that they find pleasure in watching such videos as they try to satisfy their cravings through the video. Many respondents also agreed to watching food/culinary related content for practical purposes such as trying out new recipes, learning new skills and techniques, to gain knowledge about the cultural significance of different cuisines and also to help decide what to order while dining outside. A few respondents who work in the food industry as food bloggers and chefs specified that they watch food/culinary related content in order to keep up with the trends and upgrade their cooking/baking skills.

One of the responses received from a respondent said that food is not just a basic need anymore, it is something that people have started looking forward to as desirable. That is why most people desire a different dish every meal to please their taste buds and hence this desire has translated into watching a larger amount of food related videos to quench one's cravings. Two other responses saw food as a catalyst that brought unity in people and watching such content during the pandemic helped bring in positivity even with all the negative things happening around the world.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Growth of Food Media***

The main aim of this research was to showcase the fact that the food media industry has grown tremendously over the years due to the increased interest in the same. The data gathered from the survey circulated among 375 respondents proves the same. According to the survey, a strong majority of 34.7% consume food media frequently, this number along with the 11.7% of people who watch such content all the time show that together they make a significant amount of impact on the consumption of this type of content, which in turn creates a tough majority.

Upon being asked whether the amount of food media being consumed has been increasing over the years, a whopping 61.3% of the respondents agreed to the consumption of food related content being vastly increased over the years. This clearly shows that food media has indeed grown immensely over the decades in terms of the viewership and the amount of food related content being produced. The statement is supported by the survey as a winning margin of 88% believes that there has been an increase in the number of productions related to food and culinary.

### ***Reasons to Increased Viewership in Food Media***

One of the major findings of this research has been to find out the exact reasons behind people watching food media increasingly. There have been mainly four reasons according to the open ended responses to the survey.

The most common ones being that watching food/culinary videos being satisfying and aesthetically pleasing which in turn fulfils one's cravings for a certain dish. Many respondents agreed that watching such content lightens one's mood and gives a sense of calmness and relaxation.

The second most common reason is the practical aspect of it. People consume food media in order to practically apply what they watch into their lives like learning how to cook, trying out new recipes, learning new skills and techniques.

Another common reason was to watch for exploration and knowledge purposes. One can learn endlessly about different aspects of food. Starting from learning the cultural significance of different cuisines to the best place to eat a certain dish.

The final reason to answer why people have been increasingly consuming more food media is that people have the urge to live through others. They want to experience what they cannot in real life through a screen in order to feed their cravings.

### ***Impact of the Pandemic on Food Media***

People started consuming more food media during the pandemic as everyone was locked up in their houses unable to go out to restaurants. People started bringing the world home by using the

internet to get recipes of dishes they normally ate outside to make them inside. A large part of the population also started trying out various food trends going on in the internet. People also lived vicariously by watching tempting videos of food before the pandemic.

According to the survey conducted, a majority of around 60% of the respondents agreed to watching more food/culinary videos than usual during the pandemic.

### ***Demographic Most Sensitive to Food Media***

This study wanted to find out which part of the population consumes the most food media in order to analyse in depth, which demographic of people are the most sensitive to food media. It was found that there are four sections of the population who watch

food/culinary related content the most: Female, 13-30 age group, Students and Foodies.

It can be assumed that the female population consumes more food media than that of the male population because females are usually the ones cooking in the common patriarchal Indian society which leads to them taking help of the internet to search for recipes.

When it comes to the 13-30 age group, this is the age group that is most in tune with internet trends and good enough health to eat unhealthy food while the older age groups see food as a basic necessity and not something to make a big fuss about.

Students are seen watching more food/culinary videos over the employed and unemployed population. The reason can be that students are mostly from the 13-30 age group and that the employed population does not have enough time to spend in watching food media. It comes as no surprise that foodies tend to watch more food/culinary related content as they have a genuine love and interest in food and are more invested in spending more time in watching food media than those who are not foodies.

### ***Food in the Film Industry***

Food in movies plays a major role in the symbolism, the character definition and also as the plot device. Food images and representations of food behaviours have been studied to shed light on characters' inner experiences, dramatic conflicts, narrative developments, a story's social circumstances, and the underlying mood or point of view of a film.

However, when it comes to people turning to watching feature films related to food, only around 3% of the population do so according to the survey conducted in this research.

### ***Food in the Reality TV Show Industry***

The food shows in today's reality TV show industry have grown. Instead of a mundane show, where a chef would come and cook and go with a recipe, there are many types which have come into being. There are food related travel shows, food game shows, food reality shows, cooking shows, shows related to the food industry and hotel businesses. A large portion of the older population still turn to their Television sets to watch food related shows. According to the survey, around 40% of the respondents consume their food media on Television which makes it the second most used medium after social media.

### ***Food in the Social Media Industry***

The widespread use of social networks among digital natives obsessed with sharing media communication forms and models about food in complete "virtual solitude" is an important aspect to highlight. Food-related organisations quickly joined social media as a result of our shared passion for food.

Social media sites like YouTube and Instagram have a huge market for food related content. According to the survey the highest majority of around 82% of the respondents use social media to consume food/culinary related content.

### ***Food in the OTT Industry***

TV shows also have this new platform along with the TV which is the OTT. OTT serves as the platform where you can watch your favourite food shows continuously without having to wait for the next week's or the next day's telecast on TV. Today's OTT platforms have almost everything that TV broadcasts. An increasing number of people have been switching to OTT platforms as they can watch anything at any time.

After only a few years of life, 22% of the respondents agree to watching food/culinary

related content on OTT platforms which is significant considering the number of years that Television has been around

### **Limitations**

The study was conducted in a time-bound manner within academic constraints leading to a few inevitable limitations. The first shortcoming being, the questionnaires were sent via WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Instagram only to the contacts of the researcher. There was an imbalance in the nature of demography among the respondents. Having a balance in the same would give a more reliable understanding of the population.

Another limitation of the research is the use of only questionnaires to gather data from the respondents, thus, narrowing down the responses to pre-determined and descriptive answers. A detailed interview of the respondents would enhance the depth of results produced to a large extent.

By the very nature of the subject, there are chances that the respondents themselves manipulated their responses for several reasons such as not wanting to reveal their true self or thought given their discomfort or the sense of being judged by their choice. A major limitation of conducting research in this area is the unavailability of reliable data when it comes to analysing the growth in the number of food/culinary related channels/pages on social media, TV shows, food feature films and shows on OTT (over the top) platforms over the years. Very less research has been done on the OTT industry as it is a relatively new field. Despite these limitations, the results of this study have brought to light some of the perspective of today's population's interest in food media.

### **Recommendations**

This field of research is vast and hasn't been widely researched. Future researchers of this field have scope in finding data to analyse the increase in the number of food/culinary related channels/pages on social media, TV shows, food feature films and shows on OTT (over the top) platforms over the years which will be a very substantial proof that the number of food/culinary related content productions have been increasing significantly. Potential researchers can also further their study by researching about the OTT industry as only a meager amount of research has been done in the area.

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