NDU NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY —LOUAIZE— جامعة سيدة اللـويـزة

THE IMPACT OF FOOD BLOGS IN SHAPING LEBANESE CONSUMERS' BRAND PERCEPTION IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SECTOR

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of
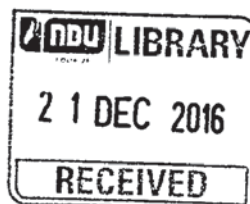
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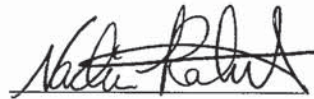Thesis Advisor, Assistant Professor

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Abstract

"We lived on farms, then we lived in cities, and now we're going to live on the Internet!" This quote is taken from the Academy Award-winning film The Social Network (Imbd.com, 2010) and can be viewed as a representation of the current trends of our modern society. The rise of Internet usage and new technology is causing the world to move towards digital media which has led to the development and facilitation of blogs. Although the history of blogs is short, they have evolved into a valid and popular medium encouraging debates and allowing individuals to share their interests, provide suggestions, and voice their opinions to the public. Additionally, gastronomy blogs are considered to be one of the most read forms in the food and beverage literature. This research seeks to study the impact of food blogs in shaping Lebanese consumers' brand perception in the food and beverage industry specifically because blogs have become an increasingly important topic in media research. The five concepts investigated in the literature review are regarding: the food and beverage sector, Internet marketing in the food and beverage industry, blogs, branding and consumer behavior. Moreover, persuasion and two step flow are two fundamental theories in understanding media effects on audience which will be supportive to this study. In order to answer the research questions and analyze the hypotheses, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used. An interview with Mr. Anthony Rahayel a well-known Lebanese food blogger was conducted in addition to an interview with Mr. Walid Baroudi owner of The Peninsula restaurant, along with a survey addressed to a random sample of Lebanese consumers who are internet users and precisely blog readers. Lastly, the results suggest that credible food bloggers have brought profound changes and impact on Lebanese consumers.

Keywords: Food blogs, consumers, brand perception, F&B industry, Lebanon.

The impact of food blogs in shaping the Lebanese consumers' brand perception in the food and

beverage sector

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. 1 Introduction to the topic

"After you've seen somebody say to you, how come we never hear about these issues in

the media you start to realize that the media itself is an issue" (McChesney, 2002). In the last few

years, a new media has become embedded in every facet of our daily lives. A generation is

growing up in a technological era where the internet has been a part of their education, social

communication, and entertainment; such rapid growth is "substantially greater than almost any

other consumer technology in history" (Putnam, 2000). The internet revolution, particularly the

foundation of the WEB 2.0 which allowed the creation and the exchange of information via

interactive platforms, gave many individuals the opportunity to use the internet as we do today.

Hence, whether it is for better or worse, this technological revolution has definitely

changed the way people communicate with each other and the Internet has become increasingly

important to users in their everyday lives. Additionally, it changed the way information is

gathered and transmitted and each day we come across various changes of Internet world that will

lead to easier communication. In the last decade, via the Internet, people are not only able to

interact easier and connect worldwide but recently, they are able to share ideas and opinions

online regarding any topic, organization or product (Goldsmith,2008). This procedure is known as

an electronic world of mouth (eWOM) and defined as: "Any positive or negative statement made

by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to

a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p.39). Therefore, in contrast to the traditional word of mouth , electronic world of mouth is a new medium that allows individuals to reach a large number of people globally (Owen &Humphery, 2009).This process is achievable through online communities such as, social media, review websites and blogs (Cheung, 2008).

In fact, at the end of the twentieth century, blogs started to reach popularity and became one of the most popular media tool, moreover it's considered to be a global phenomenon due to the increased number of blogs and allowing users to easily publish content online. According to Technorati (2006), an internet search engine for blogs the total blogs reached around 152 million with 75 thousand new blogs and 1.2 million posts were created every day, while around 33000 blogs are food blogs. The number of blogs readership is also increasing; in January 2005 and according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project blog readership has increased by 58% in 2004, and then blogs became key part of the online platform and the "newest trend in Internet communication" (Goldsborough, 2003).

This leads to the following question: what is a blog? The concept of blog was firstly created in the website called "Scripted News" by Dave Winer in 1996 (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz, 2004).Blogs derived from "web log" (Walker Rettberg 2008, 17) and Adam Penenberg assumed in an article for Wired News, "The term Blog has even made it into the Merriam-Webster dictionary as the #1 word of the year, based on the number of online lookups." Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Blog as, "Blog (noun, short for Weblog): a website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and often hyperlinks provided by the writer."Therefore blogs revolution is not only based on statistics.

Briefly, blogs are used to share thoughts, opinions, likes and dislikes, and mainly knowledge related to a specific topic or ideas which aim for a societal change; it's like a diary kept online. Therefore blogs, the newest form of communication are hitting the mainstream.

A person who writes a blog or blog author is usually called blogger; he has a complete control over his/her blog. In other words, bloggers see their blogs as a free zone to share their values and interests where they should have only a basic technical know-how and they are free to add or change their content. It requires a deep effort to write content rather than to acquire information online and most bloggers permit readers to leave a comment. According to Wagner (2007) four categories of bloggers could be identified:

- Habitual bloggers, who access their blog several times per day, publish posts on a regular basis and visit other blogs to learn and share knowledge.

- Active bloggers, who access only one time per day but they have a strong commitment and they belong to different groups.

- Personal blogger who also access one time day but for personal use.

- Lastly, blogging lurker who have a blog account but rarely publish posts; they are mainly available to get information and learn from others and not to share their own experiences.

Blogs serve people with different purposes, and different genres of blogs exist. Blogs can be personal, journalistic, political or focus on special interests and lifestyles, hence when talking about blogs we cannot dismiss food blogs, the advance form of writing about food which in the past few years became one of the most popular media and was considered to be commonly the most read forms of gastronomic literature(Vincent,2014). The first food blog called chowhound was created in1997 in America and nowadays the number of food blogs is excessively increasing all over the world.

Food blogs handle every aspect related to food and beverage from food ethics, styling, and appearance to culinary photography in addition to restaurant critics, reviews and recommendations.

The term foodie was used the first time in 1984 in England in The Official Foodie Handbook by Ann Barr and Paul Levy and it describes someone who is obsessively interested in food and dining (Barr & Levy, 1984) while the food blogger is someone who is also very interested in food and beverage and writes in conversational style, criticizes and share their opinions, personal experiences and provide suggestions (Barr & Levy 1984: 6).

Actually, food blogging is mainly to have a hobby or even a passion about food. Some food bloggers have a hobby of cooking so they share their own recipes; while others would like to share their experiences of trying new meals, new food brands or new restaurants and usually they are not paid to write their reviews. Bloggers started their occupation as hobby by sharing their interests and advices with their followers in order to become later on pro-bloggers. As such, they provide deeper information about food and beverage such as about production, preparation, distribution, and consumption in addition to recommendations about new restaurants that are mainly trending in town.

So why study food? Food, is a vital part to human survival, and Pence (2002, xi) believed that "how we think about food is really important, and such thinking helps define who we are and who we want to become, both as individuals and as a common humanity" Food is something people universally like; people share food in their everyday lives.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Lebanese are proud of their tradition of hospitality. This is a culture where it is considered an honor to welcome people and it's mainly with food that they convey their kindness and generosity.

Unlike other topics such as politics, sports, fashion; and despite the negative circumstances happening in Lebanon what helps in gathering Lebanese people is food. When talking about food this includes food products, food seller and retailers, restaurants, pubs, night clubs, coffee shops, bakeries, pastries.

Lebanese consumers are surrounded by lots of ads and info about best food or restaurant in town or latest food trends. Food is one of the trendiest topics and most shared on online communities; newsfeeds are full of check-ins, images concerning food, restaurants, or any aspect related to food and beverage.

According to the Prospects of the Lebanese restaurants article in the hospitality news magazine, the food and beverage industry in Lebanon is well-established with restaurants and lounges opening and closing on a daily basis. Therefore, this gave the rise of food blogs that also became a part of the Lebanese daily lives as another source of food-related information about food trends, new restaurants, providing food menu with price range in addition personal advices and directories.

However, changes in consumer behavior due to media are one of the most interesting topics in the marketing field but it's a relatively general and broad topic, which it would be challenging for the researcher to gather, inspect and conclude all the necessary data and findings into one research.

Yet, recently there has been no escape from blogs one of the newest and loudest media voice. Blogs are providing new opportunities and problems that are worth to investigate especially that few studies were conducted regarding food blogs in the Lebanese food and beverage sector.

Food bloggers are followed by thousands of admirers every day. They become idols and icons in the F & B sector. Briefly, a whole new medium to target audiences arrived overnight. But will Lebanese consumers value this new medium? Will they be influenced by food blogs?This research attempts to determine if food blogs are able to influence consumers 'brand perception.

1.3 Purpose of the study

In order for consumers to make a purchase decision, they usually rely on other people's opinion by getting their advices and sharing thoughts and experiences. Hence, consumer influence each other's especially that nowadays, consumers are being more connected than before through the new technology and the internet. According to a report by my Yearbook (2010): 81% of people seek advices before taking an action or making a purchase especially from online communities.

With food being such an important part of the Lebanese lives, comes the role of gastronomy blogs especially that "blog has been a social phenomenon for the last decade" (Boyd &Ellison, 2007). And it spread throughout the world as a new medium for a quick responsive communication encouraging discussions and debates. However, blogs have a meaningful role beyond only posting comments, reviews and visual content, they provide readers alternative information and recommendation for everyone without any cost. Food blogs are a source of public opinion, interests and preferences in the food and beverage industry especially that many

internet users are people who like to eat in restaurants and they are interested in food related topics so they are considered to be potential readers of food blogs. However, with the rise of the internet and digital media our food choices could be affected by a click.

Accordingly, this research aims to study the following aspects: Is the concept of food blogs understood by Lebanese consumers? Do Lebanese consumers rely on food blogs before making any decision in the food and beverage sector? Are food blogs cost effective? Do food blogs help in promoting trends in the F & B sector? How and when food blogs affect Lebanese consumers? Can food blogs make a change in the F&B industry? Is it reasonable that one food blog post might affect a restaurant or a brand reputation? Finally, can food blogs replace the traditional media in shaping consumers' perception? Are food blogs a reliable third party endorser?

Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory study is to gain a greater understanding of how food blogs shape and influence Lebanese consumers' perception, which in turn may lead to the adoption of food trends or in contrast will lead to a negative behavior in the food and beverage industry.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Finding current literature for this thesis was a complex task since the topic researched is considered to be new and blogs are the newest form of social media. However, this section presents an investigation of the following constructs: The food and beverage sector, Internet marketing in the food and beverage industry blogs, branding and consumer behavior.

2.1 Food and Beverage sector

This paper aim to study the impact of food blogs on the consumers' brand perception in the food and beverage sector therefore, it's important to start this section by providing an explanation or an overview of this sector.

Abraham Maslow (1943) came up his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" a psychology theory called Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he classified food as the lowest level and defined it as a basic and psychological need to human; which means food is one of the physical requirements essential for survival. However, food can go beyond the fact that people just eat to live, some people only enjoy the experience of eating. Food can also help to show a social status and can even express different feelings such as happiness and entertainment (Jang, 2009).

Solis (2003) assumed that "education and exposure to lot of cultures have helped our people enjoy and appreciate the different style of cuisines". This, have led to an increased demand in the food and beverage industry; therefore new trends related to food and beverage are being created and new restaurants are opening serving different type of cuisine and beverage to satisfy the highest number of customers. However, customers when doing a decision regarding choosing a place to visit or choosing any food brand ,were affected by different features such as

taste and quality , portion size, freshness , cleanliness ,staff friendliness, price range, time and convenience, social status , in addition to the health features (Jang,2009).

In fact, the food and beverage sector could be considered as a type of leisure where leisure is identified by the amount of time spent outside home mainly for workers (Stewart & Blisard, 2005). In the past, eating outside home was considered to be unhealthy but nowadays the demand for convenience is crucial, which leads to the industry growth especially that women get more and more involved in the workforce, therefore instead of wasting time preparing a meal it will be more exciting to go out and enjoy a whole experience. Additionally, several economic and demographic factors also have led to the increase of consumer expenditures on restaurants such as rising incomes and increasing numbers of working spouses (Yen, 1993).

The food and beverage is a dynamic sector that includes fine dining restaurants, fast-food restaurants, street food, retail stores, night clubs, pubs and lounges, vending machines and much more. With the internet technology revolution and the rise of the food and beverage industry, websites, applications and blogs were created and dedicated to food lovers.

We cannot deny that the Lebanese food and beverage industry is facing various obstacles that slow down its improvement. The first and obvious factor is the overall context of the country and precisely the political instability and the absence of tourists in Lebanon. Additionally, the seasonal aspect is another constraint in Lebanon. There are five traditional 'tourism periods': Christmas, New Year's, Ramadan, Hajj, and Easter holidays. Other challenges come from the market's specific structure, or rather, lack of structure. For that reason, The Ministry of Tourism is working on updating all the laws related to this sector, which still date back to 1960.

Yet, the industry is constantly developing and is showing an incredible growth from an agricultural business into an advanced and profitable business that allows this industry to offer several opportunities and strengths.

According to the Prospects of the Lebanese restaurants article in the hospitality news magazine, the Lebanese restaurant industry alone employs more than 80,000 employees where 70% are aged less than 50. Plus, the Ministry of Tourism pointed that there are around 4800 registered restaurants and hotels having licenses, while only 600 of them are registered in the Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants in Lebanon.

Finally, the food and beverage (F&B) sector in Lebanon is a well-established industry serving different cuisines and needs especially that in 2013, Lebanon was classified one of the top ten food destinations around the world according to Lonely Planet additionally, CNN ranked Lebanon among the world's best breakfast destination (The Lebanon Brief). According to the Blom Bank Invest article (March 22, 2014) and based on the Business Monitor International (BMI): Food and drink report 4.3% growth in food consumption in 2014 and the total sector sales will witness a well noticed growth of 26.4% to $3.85B. Therefore Lebanon was ranked in the 9th position out of 15 countries in the Mena region.

Indeed, the Lebanese F&B industry is going for a change as advanced technology can influence consumers purchase decision and reshapes the way organizations do business.

2.2 Internet marketing in the food and beverage industry

Since blogs are one of the newest forms of media, it's important to discuss how the F&B sector has benefited from social media as a marketing tool.

The American Marketing Association (AMA,2013) defined marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."

Several researches were conducted to investigate the role of marketing in the food and beverage sector. However, successful companies believe in the power of marketing where they agreed that it should be considered as a food not a medicine (Yoo, 2011). Hence, with the rise of technology and the emerge of Internet that affected the consumer's communication, new marketing strategies were created which helped marketers to shift from traditional marketing to what is called web 2.0 or social media that is based on customers' involvement and interactivity (Gretzel,Kang & Lee,2008). In the same context, Zynman said: "Traditional marketing is not dying – it is dead!"

Research about Internet marketing started since 1990 especially that Internet by itself enables consumers to receive and exchange information (Parker, 2012).Therefore several researchers believed that internet marketing will dominate the future. (Stephen and Galak, 2010)

Singh (2006) believed that marketing nowadays does not consist anymore about just advertising a product or a brand using the traditional media but it's more about creating an identity for the brand and to associate feelings and interactions with customers.

In the last decade, social media became the newest trend in the food and beverage sector (Cetron, 2008) and was defined as: "a second generation of web development and design, that aim to facilitate communication, secures information sharing, interoperability and collaboration on the World Wide Web" (Paris, Lee, & Seery, 2010, p. 531). In other words, social media is straightforward, easy accessible tool that has changed the way people communicate and interact with one another around the globe. Several social media sites were created but among the most

popular Facebook ,Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn are mentioned and the number of users of social networks and especially Facebook is dramatically increasing; Brandau (2010) pointed that Facebook users in December 2010 were around 600 million users.

Briefly, a whole new medium has arrived overnight to allow consumers to create, debate and share online information regarding products, brands, services or organizations (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004).Therefore, information transmitted via online communities such as social media could affect the awareness, opinions and attitudes of the consumer that might also affect his/her decision making behavior (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). And which in return will influence a business's reputation, growth and even sales (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

According to a report done by Nielsen and NM Incite (2012) 2 out of 3 respondents said they were affected by social media advertising. The report showed also that 60% of consumers get information about a specific brand or service through social networking sites and 63% prefer to check reviews online, while 3 out of 5 publish their own reviews.

On the organization level social media also plays a vital role, the Social Media Examiner report (Stelzner, 2014) revealed that 92% of surveyed marketers believed in the power of social media as a key marketing tool for the success of their businesses.

Popular companies in the food and beverage sector perceived the use of social media and online communities as a profitable tool for their businesses that provides several benefits and opportunities (Madupu, 2006). They are using this new medium to build promote their brands and to interact with their potential customers. According to Kimes (2008) "restaurants can profit from new marketing strategies by increasing customer satisfaction, increasing revenues, and helping employees become more efficient."

Then, Social media is an integral part in this industry since it is helping in building the company brand image, and allows interactivity with customers through their comments and feedback which in return the companies can resolve problems immediately through direct response (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010). According to Preece (2000) social media is a tool to attract new customers and retain the existing ones at efficient cost. Moreover, social media is a guide to use before making purchasing decisions (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Therefore, it is a source of competitive advantage or disadvantage; if a customer decides to take previous experiences or contents he/she likely to be affected by the opinions of the posting (Preece, 2000).

Additionally, according to a survey conducted 41% of the organizations are using social media to get customers feedback while 43 % to provide information and 37% believed that social media is crucial to interact with customers (Business in Social Media, 2008).

Actually, the vital element for a business success is to start by defining their target audience and the finding ways to interact and serving their needs. This could be done by using social media as inexpensive marketing tool to represent the organization and to increase exposure and traffic (Perlik, 2009).

Finally, Erik Qualman (2013) said: "We don't have a choice whether we do social media; the question is how well we do it." Therefore, several restaurants in Lebanon rely on social media as a major type of marketing. As an example Roadster the Lebanese restaurant chain inspired by casual American dinners started in one location in Ashrafieh and due to the excessive customer demand they have opened several outlets .Thus the marketing manager of Roadster affirmed to an interview done by Paul Gadalla in Cloud 961 magazine that Roadster went online before any of their competitors did, they have started by reading customers' blog and reply to every comments and suggestions. Later on, they have started using each social medium alone in addition to

website and mobile application which helped them to become the leader in this field. Roadster team believed in the power of social media because it helps you specify your target and reach them easily in a very small budget.

This section pinpointed the importance of social media mainly in the food and beverage industry. It showed how the evolution of this new medium by allowing people to publish their views to everyone could greatly affect what consumers think, feel and do. Yet, social media is a huge concept that could be categorized in five different types: 1) social networking sites, 2) social news, 3) media sharing, 4) blogs, and 5) microblogging. Each of these categories has a unique role towards individuals and companies.

2.3 Blogs: Definition, characteristics and role.

"If you're interested in any particular topic you can probably find a blog-or a dozen blogs-about it. If not, you can easily start your blog" Walker Rettberg (2008).

Blogging is a new form of communication that is becoming popular. Several researchers have investigated the concept of blogs. Some of them were interested in providing a general overview of blogs such as Blood (2002) and Stone (2004) while others such as Gillmor (2004) studied the impact of blogs in politics. Plus, some books such as Buzz Marketing with Blogs focused on the role of blogs as marketing tool. This section of the thesis will presents a general overview about blogs, its definition, characteristics and role.

Blogs grew popularity at the end of 1990s and have developed and covered more ground ever since. Jorn Barger is the first one who started blogging in1997 in his Robot Wisdom Weblog while in 1999 the first hosted weblog tools were developed and it is in 2002-2003 that blogs

gained importance in response to the US decision to invade Iraq. Additionally, the number of blogs radically increased with the existence of softwares and blog-hosting services such as Blogger and Wordpress which made setting up a blog possible for anyone with only rudimentary computer knowledge (Walker Rettberg 2008).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary mentioned the term "Blog" as one of the top 10 new words in 2004. The term Blog was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in March 2003 and defined the verb as "To write or maintain a weblog. Also: to read or browse through weblogs, esp. habitually" and weblog as "A frequently updated web site consisting of personal observations, excerpts from other sources, etc., typically run by a single person, and usually with hyperlinks to other sites; an online journal or diary" (OED 2003). Blogs were generally defined more by their form than their content. Thus, several parties such as practitioners, technology companies, academics and mainstream media have studied the concept of blogs and lots of definitions were assigned such as a blog is defined as: "a website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and often hyperlinks provided by the writer in reverse-chronological order" (Nardi, 2004: 1). "Blogs also known as "web logs" are personal website that contains links, images and texts and can be updated or monitored by any individual or group of people" (Jett T, 2012).

The concept of interactivity through posts and comments is what distinguish blogs from static websites (Stephen and Galak 2012). Blogs allow people to share debate and communicate their ideas to the public (Hussey T., 2012). Hence the term 'blogosphere' was born which refers to weblogs as a social network and blog posts are the key elements of blogs that usually includes a title, a text message and the timing or when the message is written.

According to Thevenot, (2007) around 120,000 new blogs are being created every day which makes blogs a powerful tool to both marketer and readers: "In some industries, blogs have become popular and powerful intermediaries between firms and consumers, reaching more readers than regional newspapers" (Pihl & Sandström, 2013:310).

A study conducted by Technorati (2006)[1] reveals the existence of several groups of blogs classified depending on different criteria such as: Gender or the main topic that blog is dealing with such as fashion, food, politics and lifestyle. Another group of blogs is depending on media format so a blog could be either Vblogs that contains videos or photoblogs that contain pictures.

So why do people blog and read blogs? According to Hsu and Lin (2008) the main reason is for the enjoyment and satisfaction; by blogging, a person is able to provide valuable information and express feelings in other words knowledge and expertise that could benefit and influence others. Additionally, sharing experiences and opinions with others helps individual to obtain an online reputation. Plus Weber (2009) considered bloggers as self-expressive where people are allowed to post their online thoughts with no editorial restrains and have access to the entire Web; as a result, their posts can affect other people, products, and services' reputation.

On the other hand, researchers such as Nardi (2004) found out the following three motives for reading blogs: information search, information exchange and entertainment therefore people who read blogs consider blogs a trustworthy medium.

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[1] Technorati is a publisher advertising platform that provides services such as a blog search engine helping bloggers and website publishers to get their content discovered.

This will lead to the inevitable question: are blogs credible? Levinson (2003), a well-known marketing expert considered blogs as a type of eWOM where he defined word of mouth as "one of the best sources of credibility…the road to profitability is paved with credibility."

Others researchers such as Wibbels (2006), Banning and Sweetser (2007) found that although there are no regulation or credibility concerns about blogs yet they are a great source of information where individuals can build trust and reputation better than traditional media and other online media. Additionally several influential bloggers update their content daily because their readers are waiting for valuable and reliable information. Hewitt said: "the credibility of blogs depends on their timeliness and accuracy, but invariably, the qualification of the bloggers matter as well" (2005, p.108).

A report by Technorati (2006) suggests that blog is one of the most important sources of online content and according to their survey 87% of consumers will use blogs as a search tool before the actual purchase. In comparison, Shneiderman (2000) agreed that consumers trust blogs due to the existence of past recommendation experience. Briggs (2002) believed that the added value of blogs is about the reliable and trustworthy of the information provided at no cost.

Finally blogs could be categorized depending on the writer: a blog can be personal, occupational and corporative. Personal blogs are defined when people are using personal blogs to share their opinions and feelings while 80% of blogs are included here (Gill, 2009). Occupational blogs focus mainly on trainings, whereas organizations who occupied approximately 12 %are using more and more corporate blogs to communicate with their customers and suppliers (Liang, 2009).

With all these attributes blogs are considered to be a new medium serving not only individuals but also businesses. Therefore, blogs offer people an easy way to share their knowledge at the mean time enjoy at a low cost (Wallsten 2007). In the same context Hookway (2008) supposed that blogs provide enough information and lead to debatable conversation with less privacy issue than other mediums. Even more, according to Cho and Huh (2008), blogs are now emerging as an updated version of interactive advertising tool on the Internet.

"Publishable, findable, social, viral, Syndicatable and linkable" are the six features provided by Scoble & Israel (2006) that distinguish blogs from other communication medium or channels.

2.3.1 Food bloggers

In the nineteenth century restaurant reviews and critics were introduced with Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière when he published his first edition called Almanach des Gourmands where he provided recommendation on "what, how, and where to eat" dedicated mainly to the high social class (Vincent,2014).

Additionally, in 1900 the first Michelin guide, one of the famous hotels and restaurants reference guide, was identified. Then, the first guide called The Good Food Guide was found by Raymond Postgate in 1933 which encourages readers to share reviews. Lately in 2004, in order to fit the new lifestyle, online restaurant rating and review websites were created (Gigante, 2005). Therefore with the rise of technology and internet the process became easier (Walker Rettberg ,2008) especially in 1997 when blogs have reached their popularity and the number of individuals

who shares their experiences increased then expressing opinion became as easy as clicking an icon(Semenak ,2007).

Ganda Suthivarakom, a food blogger and director of SAVEUR website argued: "in 2004, to be a food blogger was to be an outsider in the world of food media. Today it couldn't be more different" (2011b,n.p) then she added:" Food blogs leveled the playing field: chefs, cookbook authors, critics, home cooks, and civilian diners like me were all suddenly sitting at the same table. Instead of a rarefied and inaccessible group of print reviewers having a say, suddenly thousands of voices of varying skill levels and interests chimed in, and the conversation become livelier."(2011b,n.p)

Briefly, food blogs focus mainly on topics related to food specifically on recipes, food ethics such as food styling and photography in addition to travel and restaurant reviews.

The term "foodie" was discovered according to the Oxford English Dictionary, in a 1980 New York Times Magazine article but it grew popularity in August 1982 in an article entitled 'Cuisine Poseur' in Harpers & Queen magazine (Poole, 2012). Weston (2006) believed that food is highly related to consumer culture since food reflects our identity and spiritual and he defines foodie as someone with a deep interest in food without necessarily having any expertise in the field.

Barr and Levy (1984) assigned the following definition of foodie (p.6): "A Foodie is a person who is very very very interested in food. Foodies are the ones talking about food in any gathering – salivating over restaurants, recipes, radicchio. They don't think they are being trivial – Foodies consider food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama."

Foodie or food blogger writes in a conversational style and implies a wide knowledge in cuisine and dining experience (Warde, 1999), they are considered as amateur who have a high interest in food and eating, they share their experiences to the public and consider themselves distinct from professional restaurant critics since they are not paid (Robinson, 2009). Foodie choice of where to dine and share the experience is determined by the need of the audience to establish credibility and trustworthy.

In order to pinpoint the role of food blogs towards consumers we need first to understand why foodies write blogs. Food blogs are considered to be similar to a public diary where the author share their dining experience, communicate with others and to provide recommendations to the foodie community (Watson, Morgan & Hemmington ,2008).

Jay Rayner, the internationally respected restaurant critic said: "There's something delicious about a particularly cutting restaurant review. Not only does it warn fellow diners from a wasted evening and from parting undeservedly with their cash, it alerts managers towards how to improve their establishment" (Askmen, 2014). This shows that food blogs could influence opinions.

Finally, to be influential, bloggers need expend readership by providing reliable reviews and comments (Harrod, 2012). In a survey done by Hanley (2013) when choosing where to dine 70% of the respondents argued that they refer to a third party especially the food websites and blogs.

2.3.2 Blog involvement and customer intention

As mentioned previously one of the powerful feature or characteristic of blogs is interactivity, for that reason it's important to study how blog involvement could help consumers' intention to make their decision.

Actually, several behavioral researchers such as social psychology, marketing and advertising were interested in studying the involvement theory.

Therefore, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) believed that involvement is a considered major tool to understand consumers' attitude and behavior. They have suggested the following four properties for involvement: "pleasure value, symbolic value, interest and perceived risk". While Zaichkowsky (1986), mentioned three factors for involvement. The first one is connected to the personal factors such as needs and interests of the consumer whereas the second factor is related to the media and the third factor is about the actual purchase or use. Additionally, he divided involvement into three categories: (1) Advertising involvement which consider that people pay attention to ads based on personal features such as need, value or importance. (2) Product involvement: consumers assign a different reaction or feeling towards each brand, and (3) purchase-decision involvement which means that the purchase decision differ from a person another.

Moreover, Houston and Rothschild (1978) divided involvement into three categories: (1) situation involvement or non-personal factors, (2) enduring involvement or personal factors and (3) response involvement based on the cognitive and behavioral decisions. Furthermore, Andrews (1990) provides three assets for involvement: the direction or the problem, the duration in addition to the intensity which is defined as "the degree of arousal or preparedness of the involved consumer with respect to the goal-related object"p29.

Finally, Herbert Krugman differentiates between two types of involvement and he said: "two entirely different ways of experiencing and being influenced by mass media. One way is characterized by lack of personal involvement. . . .The second is characterized by a high degree of personal involvement. By this we do not mean attention, interest, or excitement but the number of conscious "bridging experiences," connections, or personal references per minute that the viewer makes between his own life and the stimulus. With low involvement one might look for gradual shifts in perceptual structure, aided by repetition, activated by behavioral-choice situations, and followed at some time by attitude change. With high involvement one would look for the classic, more dramatic, and more familiar conflict of ideas at the level of conscious opinion and attitude that precedes changes in overt behavior" (Krugman 1965, p. 355).

The concept of low and high involvement developed by Krugman demonstrates that several factors could affect a consumer's behavior. Some decisions are made based on previous knowledge and belief which led the consumer to engage in routine response behavior which is known as low-involvement decisions. While other decisions, demand more learning and consumer spend more time comparing different features.

2.4 Branding

Branding is a key tool in marketing strategy (Kotler, 2004). Morgan (2011) declared: "Branding success indicates building value for the quality of your work and differentiating your future value potential". So branding is about creating an image or a brand of the product or service in the consumers' mind that will be helpful to attain loyal customers'.

However, through blogging, the foodie is creating in an indirect way a strong brand to the restaurant or product which might affect the consumer's perception therefore it's crucial to

discuss four essential components for branding: Brand identity, brand equity, brand awareness and brand loyalty.

2.4.1 Brand Identity

According to Aaker (2002) in order to build brands value and for the success of any organization, the creation of a well-established brand identity and creating awareness are essential. Therefore he defined brand identity as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members". In other words, brand identity is what the company wants to communicate to its audience and it consists of the physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, self-image, visual components and the following elements: Brand name, packaging, logo, slogan, website, any other application. As well, it gives the first impression about the brand that will help to create interest in the customers' mind and it should differentiate the company from competitors. "It expresses the unity and durability of a brand."(Aaker ,2002)

Aaker focused on three elements in his research:

(1) The identity which means the brand as an organization or a person.

(2) The value of promise which includes: functional, emotional, self-expressive elements

(3) Positioning which is to communicate the brand meaning to the target audience.

Bjerre, Heding, & Knudtzen (2009) have developed a model which consists of four attributes to present a better understanding of brand identity and that answers the main question: who are we? The model consists of the internal attributes that include the organizational identity

or behavioral and cultural aspects of the firm that are related to a visual perspective such as the sign and symbol while the corporate identity which is more related to a strategic perspective about all the visual elements along with the philosophy of the organization such as the mission and the vision of the brand. On the other hand, the external attributes consists of the image and the thoughts the company sends to its audience in addition to the reputation or how the organization has acted over a long period of time.

2.4.2 Brand Equity

During 1990's brand researchers started to discuss the concept of brand equity. According to Kotlerand Armstrong (2004), brand equity is something intangible and consists of the positive feelings, memories and outcomes a consumer holds towards a brand. Briefly, it's how consumers think, feel and act towards a brand.

Aaker (1991) believed that five factors are input to brand equity: Recognition, perception, association, recall and loyalty.

Actually, brand equity provides benefits for both consumers and organizations (Aaker, 1991). On the firm level it is helping in increasing sales by attracting new customers and retaining the old ones in addition it provides a competitive advantage to competitors. In the same context, Keller (2002) said "one of the most important value, brand equity gives to the company, is that it provides entry barriers for competitors." On the other hand, on the consumer' side, brand equity offers them the ability to interpret, associate and store information about the brand which influence their buying behavior decision and will affect the experience therefore lead to an increase in customer satisfaction. Additionally, Keller who conducted a research regarding brand equity from consumer's point of view argued that: "customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong,

favorable and unique brand association in memory" (Keller, 2003, p67).So Keller believed that the strength of a brand occurs when a person associates certain feelings or knowledge with the brand additionally,

2.4.3 Brand awareness

Brand Awareness is about peoples' perception and cognitive reaction towards a brand; it's the ability for a consumer to identify a brand under different circumstances. So, existing brands use specific strategies in order to attract consumers' awareness while new brands also use techniques such as advertising and promotion to increase awareness. (Percy et al., 2006).

Hence, Aaker in his research about how to build a strong brand (2002) suggests three degree of awareness; an individual could be partially aware, subconsciously aware or acutely aware.

According to Aacker (1991) three levels of awareness exists: "Recognition, recall and top of mind". Recognition is the extent to which a consumer can recognize or identify a specific product by just viewing the logo and tagline and packaging while recall it's the ability for the consumer to remember a brand when given relevant indications. Finally top of mind occurs when the first brand in a product category comes into the consumer's mind.

Keller (1997) highlighted the power of brand awareness. He believed that consumers have a consideration set or a few brands that they recall in their minds and while doing the purchase and the higher level of awareness will affect the actual decision even though there are no associations to the brands.

Additionally, Aaker (1991) provided four attributes that are crucial for brand awareness:

(1) Specific associations with the brand to attain recognition.

(2) Familiarity with the brand especially when consumer starts to have knowledge about the brand.

(3) Providing a promise or the things that are interesting to the consumer.

(4) Brand to be considered when the brand becomes on top of mind of the consumer.

2.4.4 Brand loyalty

"One can look at high sales in two different ways; you can either have many people buying your brand or a few buying a lot. The second one is referred to as brand loyalty." Ford (2005).

Over the last years, customer loyalty has been an important topic in marketing (Kotler, 1994). Wilkie (1994) defined brand loyalty as "...a favorable attitude toward, and a consistent purchase of, a particular brand. In the same context, Oliver (1997) defined loyalty as: "... a deeply held commitment to purchase or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that have the potential to cause switching behavior." The previous definitions indicate that in order to attain loyalty both attitude and behavior should be favorable.

Aaker (1991) mentioned that brand loyalty should be talking into consideration when setting value to a brand since it's a key factor to improve sale; plus he states that strong companies can exist and succeed only if they have strong loyal customers.

Kevin Stirtz (2008) suggests a model of several steps that help to achieve brand loyalty. The process involves a deep understanding of customers' needs and wants, then serving and pleasing customers, after that creating easy ways for the customers to provide feedback, listening to what your customers' comment, acting for the customers and finally repeating the whole process. On the other hand Oliver provides in his book (1997) a loyalty model that includes four

stages. The first stage is called cognitive loyalty which is based on consumer's beliefs and knowledge towards a brand. The second stage is affective loyalty which is related to consumers' emotions, mood and precious satisfaction .The third stage is conative loyalty which depends of consumers' intentions to act in a certain way and finally action loyalty which is the strongest form.

Giddens and Hoffmann (2002) presented three important outcomes for brand loyalty. Firstly, a company with a high customers' loyalty leads to a higher cash flow. The second reason is for setting the price; the third and final reason is related to product search when a customer is loyal to a brand tend to search less for other brand and become less sensitive to competitors.

Finally, Aaker (1991) provides the following strategic values of brand loyalties: Reducing marketing costs and trade leverage.

2.5 Consumer behavior

This section provides a brief explanation of the consumer behavior and how they perceived brands in order to have a better understanding about the consumer's buying decision. This section is important to investigate if readers could be influenced by blog content when it comes to purchase decisions

"Consumer behavior is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society." (Kuester, 2012)

Solomon (2010) defines consumer involvement as: "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on their inherent needs, values and interests." Therefore he believed that consumer behavior is highly influenced by perceptions.

A study done by Ioppollo (2015) reveals that consumer behavior is highly related the following factors:

(1) Physiological needs which mean something essential and three psychological needs are included: autonomy competence and relatedness.

(2) Customer satisfaction which is the attitude of cognition and affection and it represents the pleasurable response of customers to brands.

(3) Customer commitment it's a major tool to build a long term growth and success.

Uggla (2001) differentiates between two types of consumer behavior: the cognitive behavior which relies on rational and logical thinking while the experience oriented behavior focuses on the emotional motivations.

On the other hand, Dalidvist and Linde (2002) presents four types of consumer behavior and the difference between them is based on the order of the following three factors knowledge, attitude and action .Therefore, the first type is the rational behavior that demands enough knowledge before making the purchase decision (knowledge -attitude- action) .The second type is the unconscious behavior related to the feelings consumers hold toward a product a service. (attitude – knowledge- action) the third type is learned is considered to be when making a decision without thinking it is a habit(action- knowledge attitude) and finally social behavior social environment influence (action- attitude -knowledge).

Normally, culture is a major element in affecting the consumer behavior yet; other factors could also play a role in influencing consumer behavior such as social, personal and psychological factors in addition to the consumers' attitudes and feelings (Saunders, 2003).

Kotler (1999) developed the buyer decision process, in which he believed that consumers follow five stages while purchasing .The first step is called need recognition where consumers define a certain need or problem. The second step is information search where consumers seek information through different sources such as personal, commercial and public sources. The third step is alternative evaluation where consumers compare between brands. The forth step is purchase decision where the actual action is done and finally the post purchase decision it's the evaluation of the product after the purchase it is about consumers' expectation of the product performance.

The consumer buying behavior according to Kotler and Armstrong (2004) is a psychological procedure that goes from hearing about the product till the buying and it involves five steps including the following theories: Awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption.

Homer and kahle (1988) argued that both values and cognitions explain the consumer behavior. Therefore they have conducted a study to understand the consumer behavior in the food and beverage sector where they found two types of values: Internal and external. Thus, individuals who place more attention on the internal value tend to spend more time to check where they want to eat and which restaurant they should visit.

In the same context, Hansen (2005) emphasized that consumers 'perception on food is based on a whole food serving environment. Costel, (2010) affirmed that food perception occurs

when the brain receives some input that could be tactile or gustatory or even tactile. Plus, consumers' perception could be also influenced by their past experience, attitudes, and beliefs. This perception will drive consumer acceptance. Font (2009) agreed that perception is a vital determinant of consumer acceptance.

Finally Consumers' buying decision is not an easy process and consumers' behavior, perception and their attitude affect the decision however the purchase decision could also be influenced by factors such as the price, quality and value of the product or service. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004)

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a discussion about the theoretical framework on which the study is based upon. The theoretical framework chapter presents theories within the fields of media and it is structured according to a funnel approach. It will begin by defining and understanding the theories in a broader sense and the discussion will narrow down to link the theories with our main study objective.

Therefore, to study the impact of blogs in shaping Lebanese brand's perception, two fundamental theories are required: The persuasion and two-step flow theories.

3.1 Persuasion Theory

Different forms of communication exist however; persuasion is one type of communication that is well-known especially in the media field. The concept of persuasion dates back to the fifth century, and Aristotle was one of the first writer and analyzer of persuasion. Then, in the twentieth century researchers have investigated more and more this concept. It was mainly associated with Carl Hovland plus, over the last 50 years it begun to widespread popularity and was examined in the mass communication.

Persuasion is defined as "attitude change resulting from exposure to information from others."(Olson & Zanna, 1993, p. 135). The main objective of persuasion is to influence others and mainly it involves changing individual's thoughts and perceptions that will usually leads to a behavioral change. So, persuasion seeks to change attitude therefore understanding attitudes is crucial when discussing persuasion.

Several studies have argued that communication aims to change attitude. Attitude is defined as a "primarily a way of being "set" toward or against certain things" (Murphy, Murphy, & Newcomb, 1937, P. 889). Briefly, attitude exists everywhere thus any individual could have predispositions that could be either positive or negative towards an idea, an event, or something or even someone (O'oKeefe, 1990). In fact, attitude has three components: affective, cognitive or behavioral in other terms, people' perception towards something or towards a topic or object is based on their feelings or beliefs or based on their previous action and experiences.

Hovland (1953) believed that attitudes are difficult to change and he linked the concept of attitude to the learning theory. Therefore we learn then our attitudes are changed. Similar to Hovland study, Whitehead (1968) who argued that four main elements could help in changing an attitude: credibility, professionalism, motivation and objectivity. On the other hand, Greenwalds' cognitive response model (Greenwald,1968) suggests that there is a difference between the acceptance and the retention of the message therefore individuals can learn without changing their attitudes thus attitudes could change based on the existing attitude knowledge and feelings.

Katz (1960) suggests that "unless we know the psychological need which is met by the holding of an attitude we are in a poor position to predict when and how it will change." (p.170) Therefore he differentiates between four functions of attitudes: "(1) The instrumental, adjustive or utilitarian (2) ego-defensive (3) value-expressive (4) knowledge."

When studying persuasion, it is important to mention the process model of persuasion. Actually there are three major models that share common features; they agreed that persuasion could change over time while the receiver who is considered to be active should pass into several steps either cognitive or information learning.

In the first model the information-processing theory McGuire's (1968) provides six steps that enable individuals to change their attitude: A convincing message should be delivered to the receiver which in turn the receiver should listen, comprehend, be convinced, adopt that will lead to the actual behavior. Secondly, Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) developed the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) in which they suggest two ways of processing the influential message. The systematic processing which requires careful and effort to examine of the message while the heuristic processing is when decision making is based on someone you trust or expert. The last model, according to Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly's (1989) heuristic-systematic model suggests three main factors for attitude change, the motivation to accept the message, the central route when the receiver gets the message based on cognitive learning whereas the peripheral route is based on peripheral indications such as style or credibility of the message.

Persuasion may occur in aspect in our daily lives however it's not surprising that persuasion theories have played a key role in the media field therefore many scholars have used it to inspect the effect of media on the consumers as an example , Miller (1980) agreed that communication provides three persuasive effects. The first effect is shaping the attitude this is done when the consumer associate knowledge with the product or service whether it's positive or negative .The second effect is reinforcing while the third and most important factor is changing.

Regarding applying this theory when studying the impact of blogs, it may offer understanding of the consumer behavior and it will highlight how consumers interact with blogs and how the perception and attitude of consumers can be shaped and affected. This theory will be supportive to examine if food blogs can persuade or exert a powerful persuasion on Lebanese consumers' perception, attitude and even behavior. Plus, it may also offer an understanding how

food blogs can possible change a consumer's attitude or behavior without even consciously trying to do so.

In other words, people are referring to food blogs for gaining advice and receiving recommendations before making any decision therefore they are being persuaded.

Finally, Blogs which are considered as new type of independent third party endorsers can persuade consumers' attitude. (Freberg, Graham and A. Freberg, 2010). Thus, Brown and Hayes, (2008) define influencers as third party people who can effect customer's purchasing decision and they stated that blogs enables the spread and reach of a message sent out and it's mainly the content of the blogs that could affect people. Plus they considered blogs a new marketing influencer where they define influencer marketing as 'a new approach to marketing, important because sales forces both understand and support it. The experts state it directly address the most common sales barriers within prospective customers and focuses attention on those individuals who advice decision-makers. We call these people influencers, and they are as crucial to the sales process as the prospects themselves.'

3.2 Two-step flow Theory

Another theory that could be helpful is considered the two step flow of communication since it gives an understanding of how mass media influence decision making.

This theory dates back to 1944 and it was introduced by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet in The People's Choice in which they wanted to examine the decision-making process during a Presidential election campaign. They expected to identity the power of media towards consumer behavior which in their case was the voting intention however

they found out that people's voting were affected more by personal contacts. Based on the previous findings, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) developed the two-step flow theory of mass communication in a book called personal influence.

The theory suggests that the message from the media passes in two different stages. "In the first step, messages are reported and distributed by the mass media to what is, to all exterior appearance, a more or less homogeneous mass audience. In the second, horizontal opinion leaders interact and contextualize these mediated messages for their small groups who then internalize the interpretations of the contents" (Bennett and Manheim, 2006, p. 213). So people build their opinions based on the opinion leaders' influence who are in return influenced by the media.

Therefore, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), defined the opinion leadership concept as follow: "What we shall call opinion leadership, if we may call it leadership at all, is leadership at its simplest: it is casually exercised, sometimes unwitting and unbeknown, within the smallest grouping of friends, family members, and neighbors...it is the almost invisible, certainly inconspicuous, form of leadership at the person-to-person level of ordinary, intimate, informal, everyday contact (p. 138). While Solomon et.al (2010) defines opinion leaders as "people who are knowledgeable about products and whose advice is taken seriously by others."

Additionally, Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman (1996) believed that in order for people to make their purchase decision they usually rely on other people to get advices and information. Those people are considered to be influential opinion leaders who are fluent pioneers, and have a large expertise in a specific field (Dichter, 1996).

Actually, lots of the communication researchers and marketers were interested in this topic since opinion leaders could have an impact and influence people' attitude and behavior in a specific community (Goldsmith & De Witt, 2003). Hence, Chau and Hui (1998) were interested in identifying how opinion leaders affect their audience; therefore they found out that opinion leaders are considered to be idols to their audience who give them inspiration and motivate them, plus they communicate the message through word of mouth and give them advices and directions.

However is the two-step flow still applicable to explain the factors to which people refer when they seek information in the digital age? Does the concept of opinion leadership still exist? And if opinion leaders are still around, are their characteristics the same as those attributed to them in past studies?

The age of social networking which is represented by different search engines such as Facebook , Youtube and blogs is not fundamentally different from traditional media and opinion leadership except that it allows globally reach and more interactivity with the audience.

The two-step flow is still a useful construct and this theory is crucial and supportive to this thesis especially when applying it to the online field. In fact, electronic world of mouth (eWOM) plays an important role in passing information to thousand people in an easy convenient way through social communities (Sun, Youn, & Wu, 2006).

Finally, opinions that are expressed online especially through blogs are durable and for long terms plus they do not provide face-to-face human pressure which make them influential. Therefore, blogs through their different features such as experience exchange are considered to be opinion leaders who also lead conversations and provide knowledge and information to others and

have the ability to manipulate their readers thus could exert influence on other's perceptions, attitudes and decisions.

3.3 Research Question and Hypotheses

After reviewing the different roles and characteristics of blogs especially in the food and beverage industry, the exploration of blogs impact in shaping the Lebanese consumers' brand perception was determined as a main objective of this thesis, expressed by the following research questions:

RQ 1: Why do people share their advice and recommendations regarding food and beverage?

RQ 2: What are the values, benefits and opportunities that food blogs provide to Lebanese consumers?

RQ 3: What role do blogs play in the decision making process of food and beverage in Lebanon?

RQ4: How do food bloggers influence consumers' perceptions and trends in the Lebanese food and beverage industry?

RQ 5: Does the Lebanese reader's level of content satisfaction influence their perceptions towards products and services in the food and beverage industry?

Thus, in order to examine and to answer the previous research questions the following directional hypothesis will be analyzed.

H1: Credible food blogger's recommendation will positively affect Lebanese consumer's perception.

H2: Sharing knowledge, experiences and images through food blogs has a positive impact in shaping Lebanese consumer' perception.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Methodology is a fundamental section in conducting a research. Checkland (1993) defined methodology as "a set of principles of methods which in any particular situation have to be reduced to a method uniquely suitable to that particular situation". Cited in (Williamson & Bow, 2002, p.333). Whereas a method refers to the approaches used in collecting and analyzing the data (Sanders et. al.2009). This chapter will demonstrate the design of the research and what methods were used in order to formulate and implement the research as well as how the data collection was executed and analyzed.

4.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy indicates how the data should be gathered, analyzed and used. There are two research philosophies that are mostly popular. In this study both philosophies are implemented.

The positivism which reveals facts and observed data that could be measured. It is used to test, support, or reject the theory. It is considered to be artificial where it uses a deductive model from general to specific (Jacobsen, 2002).So hypotheses are developed prior to the study and relevant data are collected and analyzed to determine whether the hypotheses are confirmed.

On the other hand, according to Saunders (2009) Interpretivism is used to "understand differences between humans in our role in social actors". It develops theories as part of the research process theory is considered to be a "data driven" and engages as part of the research process evolving from the data. It conducts natural studies. It uses an inductive model where data

are collected relevant to some topic and grouped into categories. Interpretive are considered to be subjective, there is no single reality, and each observer creates as part of the research process.

4.2 Methods

As stated earlier, the aim of the study is to investigate the impact of food blogs in shaping the Lebanese brand's perception in the food and beverage industry. Therefore in order to provide a greater understanding for the research problem in question, a mix approached which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative will be adopted.

4.3 Qualitative research approach

In order to answer the previous research questions and prove significance of the hypotheses a qualitative method is vital to this study.

Zikmund (2000) defined qualitative research as "stories, visual portrayals, meaningful characterizations, interpretations, and other expressive descriptions." In the same context, Thompson and walker (1998) described the qualitative research as: "it answers the questions concerning what is happening how something can be explained or how certain phenomenon are perceived." Briefly, it is based on beliefs rather than numbers.

Interview plays a central part in the qualitative research and although there are lots of influential food blogs and restaurant reviews such as Zomato, Whereleb, Ta3mini.com and others. The first interview was conducted with Mr. Anthony Rahayel, Lebanese foodie that evaluates his culinary experience in his blog called No Garlic No Onions[2] where he also offers suggestions and professional images that allow consumers to enjoy his experience. The information collected

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[2] http://www.nogarlicnoonions.com/

could be beneficial to the topic researched in terms of how could a single person with a dentist by profession influence others perceptions in the F&B industry.

The second interview was done with Mr. Walid Baroudi the owner of The Peninsula, a well-known Italian restaurant in Lebanon that was affected by both positive and negative blog posts. This interview will be efficient since it's from a company perspective in other words; it will fulfill to understand how a restaurant food and beverage which is a part of the Lebanese food and beverage industry perceived food bloggers. The information collected will present an understanding of how restaurant will benefit from a positive review and how do they react towards a negative review and it will also highlight the overall purpose of the study and it will help in identifying how food blogs are shaping Lebanese consumers' perceptions.

Both interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, which means that the interviews were structured and planned ahead (Appendix 1 and 2) but the questions varied as well as the follow-up questions depending on what the respondent answered.

Interviews are fundamental for this research since they provide us with effective information about the subject we are researching and shed the light on the main purpose of this study and will lead to answer the research questions through the second research approach discussed below.

4.4 Quantitative research approach

This study will also adopt a quantitative research method. Zikmund (2000) said that "the purpose of quantitative research is to determine the quantity or extent of some phenomenon in the

form of numbers." Additionally, Ryen (2004) describes the quantitative method as an examination of hypotheses.

The main objective is to determine the relationship between the independent variable which is food bloggers recommendation and the dependable variables that are the Lebanese consumers' perception.

Data collection was done using a survey with questions written in English. Collis and Hussey (1997) define a questionnaire as " a method for collecting primary data in which a sample of respondents are asked a list of carefully structured questions chosen after considerable testing, with a view to elicit reliable responses." The questionnaire will be filled randomly by Lebanese aged between 18 and 38 who read blogs. According to a study by a Dubai-based market research firm, published in the "Lebanon This Week" report by Byblos Bank, the target age (mentioned previously) is considered to be the most internet users. In addition, this survey will adopt closed-ended questions and will collect measures of consumer behavior and attitude. In addition, the questionnaire will include some questions about demographic factors and descriptive variables, including gender, age, home residence, social status.

Additionally, the survey research methodology was chosen because a lot of information can be collected from a large number of people in a cost effective manner. The questionnaires were posted online through online surveys websites in March 2016.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

5.1 Interviews

An interview with Dr. Anthony Rahayel[3] took place on the 1st of April, 2016 at 8:30 pm at Dunkin Donuts Zalka, to find out more about the man behind the blog.

At the beginning of our discussion, Dr. Rahayel insisted to explain and clarify the concept of a food blogger. According to Dr. Rahayel, several Lebanese individuals are creating online pages where they share their thoughts and pictures regarding some dishes or restaurants, however they should not be identified as food bloggers. "Many individuals are blogging for fun and enjoyment rather than for professional reasons, and most just want to share recipes or food-related experiences." "Food blogger is someone who is impassioned about food, who should have a culinary background, a professional know-how and expertise in the F & B industry. He/she should write with an objective point of view as opposed to the mystery shopper who is getting paid" said Dr. Rahayel.

In 2012, after he developed his knowledge by learning the gastronomic vocabulary along with the objective analysis of culinary experiences , Dr. Rahayel created his blog called "No Garlic No Onions" where he brings to the public his latest explorations, opinions, advices and

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[3] Dr. Rahayel is a dentist, hypnotherapist and photographer by profession. Aside from his daily job, he still manages to find time to fulfill his gastronomic passion and travel around the world to discover ethnic food in order to share it with the public via his blog No Garlic No Onions. It all goes back to the year 2008, where Dr. Rahayel wrote his very first review on Trip Advisor after he encountered a bad experience in a hotel located in Santorini.

shares his experiences and recommendations in respect of restaurants in his motherland Lebanon as well as overseas. He publishes daily restaurant critiques and food reviews and is in constant research for the best gourmet spots in the country and abroad mainly because he considers that "Food is more than a simple necessity, food is passion, and food is art." and he believes that "If you have a positive outlook on life, you can make anything happen."

His food blog is called "No Garlic No onions" which refers to his revulsion to garlic and onions, the two most used ingredients of the Mediterranean cuisine, "the name of my blog is not related the content. But, I am trying to prove that food can be done without these ingredients." he explained.

Dr. Rahayel eats out around five times a week with his family or friends. He likes to discover new tastes, new services and new concepts and promote them to Lebanese. He does not compare a snack to a fine dining restaurant yet he believes that each restaurant category has its own standards to look at. He writes what he feels regarding the welcoming, food, setting, service, music and other aspects. And according to him , what differentiates "No Garlic No Onions" from other blogs, is his commentary method which is based on a clear sectioning of : details of the place, décor and ambiance, appearance and taste of the dishes accompanied by pictures , the welcoming section and service, the pluses, the minus and recommendations for any needed alterations. This way, the reader will be free to focus on the section that interests her/him the most.

He started his rating system over 100 divided into ten sections from the call for a reservation, the welcoming, the menu's choice, food presentation, food temperature, food taste, service, ambiance /music, architecture/interior and finally the value for money. This rating system

was updated recently where everything related to food became over 50 and all the remaining criteria, over 50. His rating system was inspired by the Michelin Guide, which rates restaurants for comfort and also for food via the popular Michelin Stars.

After only four months the blog was a massive success, it has been highly ranked by thousands of visitors and his social media accounts attracted till now more than 60,000 followers by writing more than 7000 articles and visiting more than 1400 restaurants. Dr. Rahayel affirmed that this achievement is due to his credibility as he writes honest reviews yet in a professional way. He added that he is not getting paid for his input and certainly not accepting any invitations nor ads on his website.

Then, how a dentist is qualified to make such decisions? Dr. Rahayel, explained the reason which allowed him to judge and criticized as following: "I have a wide experience in this domain generated from meetings with hundreds of chefs, restaurant owners; I travel once per month to discover international cuisines and compare them to restaurants in Lebanon therefore I have the ability to differentiate the good from the bad, what is tasty and what is not".

He represents an average person who likes to go out and eat good food and get his money's worth. Nevertheless, he doesn't permit himself to give his opinion loudly or directly to a waiter, he only writes in a mature way on his blog, as he said.

The main purpose of his blog was simply to create an online platform for the Lebanese people to know the truth on where to go and where not to go. Dr. Rahayel said that restaurants might have press releases and marketing strategies to promote their positive services but in his personal opinion not all restaurants are up to the standards and there are many things that should

be improved, therefore he decided to start by trying restaurants and sharing his opinion. He wanted the Lebanese people to enjoy eating out as he enjoys eating in Europe, especially that public criticism was somehow a taboo in Lebanon. His aim was to give a wakeup call to the Lebanese customers and to realize a change in the restaurant's industry.

The top viewed blog posts are the comparison between Roadster and Crepaway, the comparison between Middle East Airlines and Air-France and his article about Joseph snack.

According to him, his blog targets both consumers and businesses. He considers that his readers or followers are everyone who believes in positive and constructive change without spreading negativity, similarly to him. He mentioned that Lebanese consumers are following him, mainly because they need to be aware of what to expect before visiting a restaurant. He added that not all individuals have to share the same opinion with him but at least they should agree to common grounds of standards when speaking of something essential as food.

When it comes to restaurants' reviews, he said that there are two different types of managements: those who do not tolerate any kind of criticism and they react negatively about his comments, some of them getting to the point of sending him threats, while others who represent the majority take his feedback into consideration, change, improve and then invite him over to thank him and re-assess the ameliorations done. As an example he mentioned Roadster dinner while on the other hand, Fuddruckers in Lebanon was a total fail and it was shut down after his review.

Due to the popularity of "No Garlic No Onions" blog Anthony decided to expand in the F & B sector. From a food blogger to a food discoverer and an ambassador of hope and enjoyment,

he lately created the box which contains healthy home-made products. He also organized souk el Akel which takes place every Thursday in Beirut Down Town and different Lebanese cities occasionally. Additionally, he is the anchor of "Mechwar" broadcasted on MTV every Sunday morning. Dr. Anthony's main objective from this TV show was not to be a celebrity but to reach people who are not active on social media and to let them cherish their country by rediscovering cities and the hidden treasures in Lebanese villages and to make you "a tourist in your own country".

Dr. Rahayel never expected that his blog will pick up so quickly. He is always delighted about receiving interesting feedback from well-known hotels and restaurants owners claiming that they have been taking his advices into consideration and they are happy to be working on the recommendations given.

Dr. Rahayel concludes that people see him as a food blogger but he considers himself someone who wants to do a change. He stated: "with more than 30 to 40 restaurants opening every month in Lebanon, we need to find out what is really cooking since not all restaurants are owned by F &B professionals therefore the industry needs to be pushed to a better level." Finally, he added that although he lost lots of friends due to his opinion yet his credibility always comes first.

The reason behind interviewing Dr. Rayahel is to understand how certain, regular individuals who are influential more than others could persuade actively others' perception and decisions. These influential people, who are credible, yet interested in novelty, opinionated, world aware and not afraid to express their views regarding food and beverage have been categorized as opinion leaders. Their opinions are shared online where they can reach a large number of people

globally. Therefore, influential food bloggers are the trend predictors and trend setters and they have an influence beyond their own experience estimated.

Then how the restaurants feel about food blogger critiques? Do they agree with them? How do they criticize their critiques?

In order to answer the previous questions, a second interview took place on March 30, 2016 at The Peninsula offices in Ashrafieh with Mr. Walid Baroudi[4] the general manager and senior director of JRW Hospitality, The Peninsula Co. and O2 management which operates in the hospitality, real estate and construction sectors in the MENA region in addition to being a board member of the Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants, Cafes, Night-clubs & Pastries in Lebanon.

Mr. Baroudi used to read food blogs for personal inquiries: "I started to follow international travel-related content such as Trip advisor and Yelp and I was interested in reading their views and checking out the gastronomic pictures posted in order to create a general idea about the restaurants that I am willing to try when I travel." He also stated : "customers' interactivity and positive reviews are the two main factors that encourage me to try a new restaurant."

Later on, when the concept of food blogs was introduced in Lebanon, he started following Lebanese individuals' food bloggers that allow him to stay tuned in respect of all the news and

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[4] Mr. Braoudi is a graduate of the Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne and a dynamic, result-driven with a strong track record of performance in turnaround and high paced organizations.

trends happening in this industry. However, Mr. Baroudi does not share his opinion and advices online mainly because he is an active member in the F& B sector and he has a lot of connections.

"The blogs that I follow are quickly indexed by search engines such as Google and they are updated on a regular basis which makes the blog a convenient source of information for consumers who want to find out what is happening now in the Lebanese food and beverage, chef success stories and news in the culinary world " said Mr. Baroudi.

Moreover, Mr. Baroudi believes in the power of social media upon which he is relying pretty much nowadays in order to promote his restaurants. Additionally, he mentioned that The Peninsula restaurant as other restaurants in Lebanon was affected by food bloggers.

Several reviews were positive and it's a pleasure for him to read customers' encouraging feedback especially when they post food plates images with a catchy comment. He added, "By reading those reviews, I can experience people's trust and enjoy my company's success."

In return to this process, The Peninsula team reposts those comments and images on their social media pages such as Instagram and Facebook to interact with their followers.

He also added that positive reviews have several advantages on a business level such as it increase consumers' awareness and it helps to drive traffic to your website by which you have an opportunity to convert that traffic into leads or tangible results briefly it's an added value to your restaurant.

In 2012, a review posted online mentioned The Peninsula as one of the best locations in Dbayeh[5], but somehow customer's carelessness seem to neglect it. The review included a mouthwatering food images, with a special recommendation for one of the restaurant's famous Risotto. This resulted with Facebook followers increase and new customers were encouraged to try the restaurant. Mr. Baroudi stated that he has never expected the effect of a blog post to influence Lebanese and to boost the business.

On the other hand, Mr. Baroudi affirmed that customers have the right to leave negative comments or reviews about your restaurant whether it is about the service, the price, the food quality or any other accident. He mentioned an example of a negative comment that was published online claiming that "It's not worth the visit due to the bad restaurant service and the unprofessional staff behavior." Then Mr. Baroudi explained how his restaurant usually deals with such problems: "The first thing we usually do is checking the blogger's profile to see if he is really credible. After that, our main objective is to respond in a respectful way because it shows the customer and everyone else who reads the review that the management is concerned about the customers' point of view and comments while ignoring or even deleting a comment will cause spreading a bad image of the company since it will serve to anger the customer more and provide them with a reason to react in a very negative way such as spreading the word to all their family and friends how unprofessional your company and its employees are. Whereas, in some cases they even try to contact privately the customers and try to resolve the problem."

He added that one of the major concepts in the F&B industry that should be always taken into consideration is that "the customer is always right." Therefore every management in this field

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[5] Dbayeh is a town located on the Mediterranean sea in the Matn District, Mount Lebanon governorate, between Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, and Jounieh.

must be prepared to handle any type of complaints in order to show followers that we are taking criticism seriously. Plus, a negative comment should be turned to a positive improvement.

Lastly, Mr. Baroudi believes that Lebanon is a small country where people affect each other's especially when it comes to dinning. "Today, food blogs could play a significant role in persuading Lebanese consumers mainly the young generation who are in his opinion the most internet users."

Mr. Baroudi concluded that a food blogger needs to create a welcoming and enjoyable environment where the intended audience readers arrive, and stay. But he re-iterated that in order for a food blogger to be influential he must have at least a certain know-how in the hospitality industry and he should not judge a restaurant from the first visit nor criticize in a harmful way in order to keep his professionalism standards .

In order to answer the previous research questions, both interviews were crucial to this study. They are important because they gave us a greater understanding of the food blogs concept from two different perspectives; from a food blogger who publish posts to express himself and share his passion in order to make a difference in the F &B industry. While the restaurant owner is a food blog reader since he believed that food blogs is a new way to stay updated with the newest trends in the industry and to monitor your competitors.

Finally, while food bloggers write online reviews, companies are eagerly listening to what they are commenting about their brands, products, and services. Both interviewees agreed that food blogs allow every individual to express loudly a sense of enjoyment or dislike and help to

promote learning which in return could affect the Lebanese consumers 'perception and purchase decision.

5.2 Surveys

This study also adopted a survey (Appendix 3). The survey is divided into three sections: demographics and general information about the participants, their general attitudes towards food blogs and whether they rely on food blogs in their decision making. A total of 137 questionnaires were collected and kept for further analysis after deleting 15. They were deleted since they do not match the target age of this study.

Based on the survey, the age of the respondents is ranged between 18 and 38 .The majority of the respondents were single , Lebanese females who have completed a bachelor degree, who are employed and earning more than 28000$/year. Among 137 participants, 122 were food blog readers and 53.3% of them read others' responses and comments posted on food blogs while 47.4% agreed and 28.5 % strongly agreed that food blogs' content is interesting which indicates that the food blog concept is understood and accepted by Lebanese consumers.

5.2.1 Data Analysis: Survey Results

In the data analysis process, descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentage were used for demographic data. In the second and third section , the statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, with "1" = Strongly Disagree and "5" = Strongly Agree. Moreover, the mean values for each item were calculated and the results were as follows.

Question 1: Gender: the data is taken from $N = 137$ where $M = 1.60$ and $SD = 0.49$.

82 participants were females (59.9%) while 55 were male (40.1%).This shows that the sample consisted of female more than males.

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		1.60
Median		2.00
Std. Deviation		.492

Table 1: Gender Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	55	40.1	40.1	40.1
	Female	82	59.9	59.9	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1: Gender Distribution
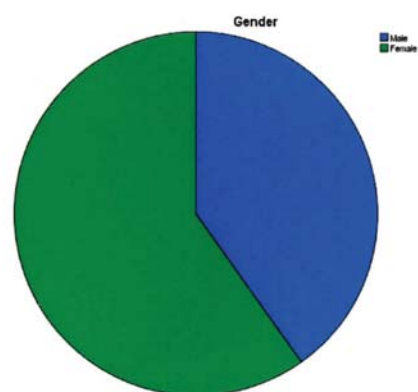
Question 2: Age: the age of the participants ranges between 18 and 38, the results yielded:

M=27.28 and *SD* =4.88.

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		27.28
Median		27.00
Std. Deviation		4.864

Table 1.1:Age Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18	4	2.9	2.9	2.9
	19	4	2.9	2.9	5.8
	20	1	.7	.7	6.6
	21	5	3.6	3.6	10.2
	22	10	7.3	7.3	17.5
	23	8	5.8	5.8	23.4
	24	7	5.1	5.1	28.5
	25	12	8.8	8.8	37.2
	26	14	10.2	10.2	47.4
	27	11	8.0	8.0	55.5

28	15	10.9	10.9	66.4
29	8	5.8	5.8	72.3
30	4	2.9	2.9	75.2
31	2	1.5	1.5	76.6
32	4	2.9	2.9	79.6
33	8	5.8	5.8	85.4
34	9	6.6	6.6	92.0
35	2	1.5	1.5	93.4
36	4	2.9	2.9	96.4
37	4	2.9	2.9	99.3
38	1	.7	.7	100.0
Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.1:Age Distribution
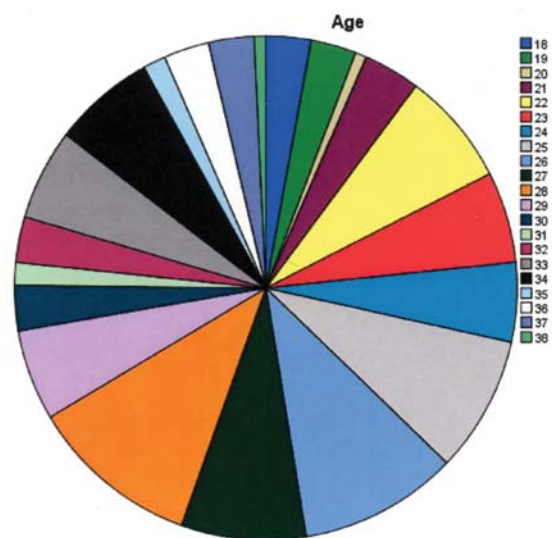
Question 3: Social status: 59.1% of the participants (81participants) were single, whereas 40.9% were married (56 married). The results yielded M= 1.59, SD= 0.43 (Table 1.1).

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		1.59
Median		2.00
Std. Deviation		.493

Table 1.2:Social Status Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	married	56	40.9	40.9	40.9
	single	81	59.1	59.1	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.2: Social Status Distribution
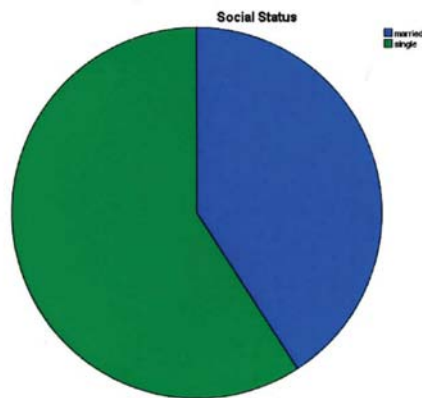
Question 4: Residency: The majority of the respondents (40.1 %) are living in greater Beirut while 19.7% in north Lebanon, 2.9% in south Lebanon and 37.2 % in Mount Lebanon. The results yielded $M=2.96$ and $SD=1.09$

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		2.95
Median		3.00
Mode		3
Std. Deviation		1.094

Table 1.3: Residency Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	North Lebanon	27	19.7	19.7	19.7
	south Lebanon	4	2.9	2.9	22.6
	Greater Beirut	55	40.1	40.1	62.8
	Mount Lebanon	51	37.2	37.2	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.3: Residency Distribution
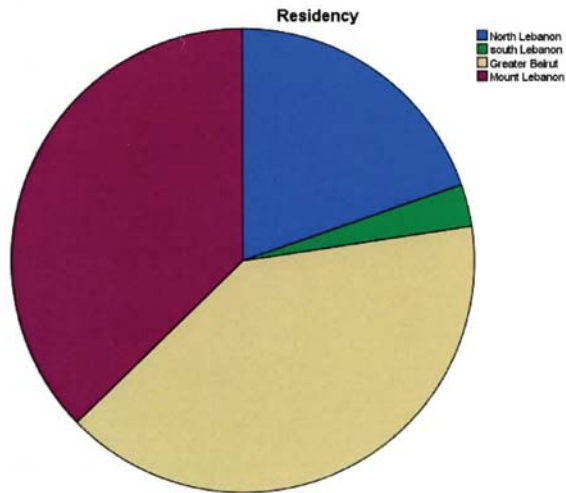
Question5: Education: Regarding the education level, none of the participants had a basic education, whereas 10.2 % had a high school degree (14 participants), 91 participants (66.4 per cent) had a BS/BA degree, and 23.4 per cent (32 participants) had a MS/MA degree. The results yielded M= 3.13, SD= 0.56 (Table 1.4).

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		3.13
Median		3.00
Mode		3
Std. Deviation		.566

Table 1.4: Education Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School Level	14	10.2	10.2	10.2
	BA/BS Graduate	91	66.4	66.4	76.6
	MA/MS Graduate	32	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.4: Education Distribution
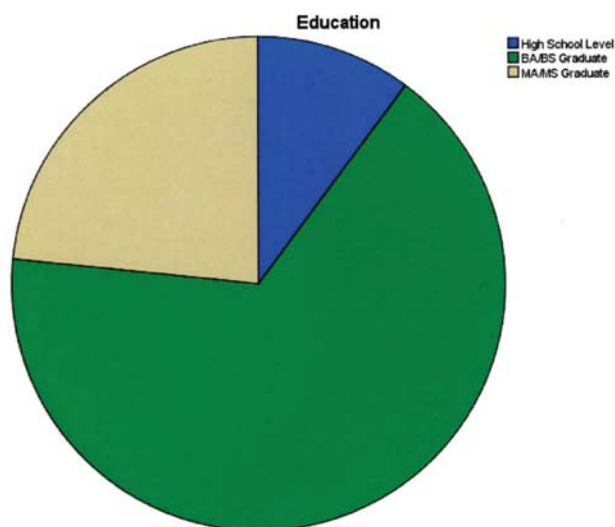
Question 6: As for participants' occupations, 3.6 per cent were student (5 participants), 115 participants were employees (83.9 per cent), 9 participants were unemployed (6.6 per cent), and

3.6 per cent owned a private business (5 participants). The results yielded M= 1.29, SD= 0.739

(Table 1.5).

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		1.29
Median		1.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.739

Figure 1.5:Occupation Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employee	115	83.9	83.9	83.9
	Unemployed	9	6.6	6.6	90.5
	Student	8	5.8	5.8	96.4
	Own Private Business	5	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.5: Occupation Distribution
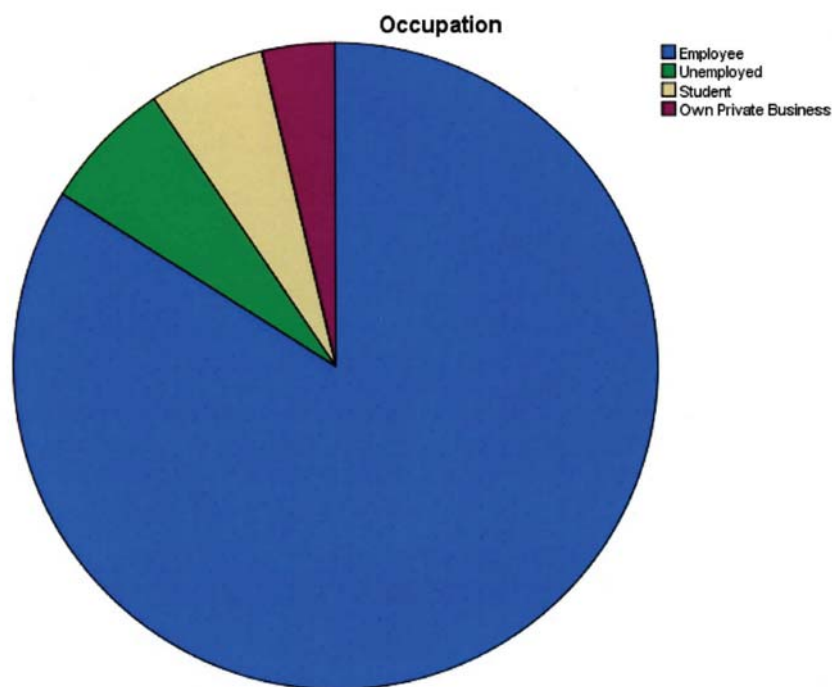
Question 7: Income per year:

Among the 137 participants, 18 responses were missing, While 19.7 % (27 participants) have a yearly income average less than 12000$ per year, 16.8% (23 participants) have a yearly income average between 12001 and 20000$, 24.8% (34 participants) earn an average income between 20001 and 28000$ and 35 participants (25.5 %) earn more than 28000$.The results yielded M=2.65 and SD=1.32

N	Valid	119
	Missing	18
Mean		2.65
Median		3.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.132

Table 1.6: Average income per year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 12000$	27	19.7	22.7	22.7
	12001-20000$	23	16.8	19.3	42.0
	20001-28000$	34	24.8	28.6	70.6
	more than 28000$	35	25.5	29.4	100.0
	Total	119	86.9	100.0	
Missing	System	18	13.1		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 1.6: Average income per year
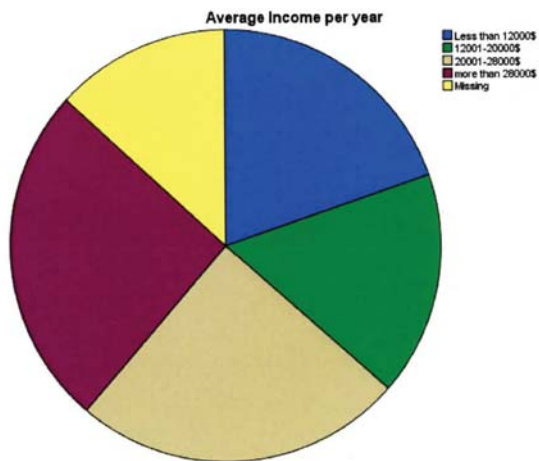
Question 8: Average hours spent online per week

Three participants (2.2 % per cent) spend less than five hours per week, 19 participants (13.9 per cent) spend between 5-8 hours per week, while 20.4 per cent (28 participants) spend between 9-12 hours per week, 15.3 per cent (21 participants) spend between 13-16 hours per week, 38 participants (27.7 per cent) spend between 17 and 20 hours per week and 20.4 % (28 participants) said that they spend more than 20 hours per week using the internet. The results yielded M=4.14, SD= 1.43 (Table 1.7).

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		4.14
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		1.431

Table 1.7:Average hours spent online per week

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 hours	3	2.2	2.2	2.2
	5 to 8 hours	19	13.9	13.9	16.1
	9 to 12 hours	28	20.4	20.4	36.5
	13 to 16 hours	21	15.3	15.3	51.8
	17 to 20 hours	38	27.7	27.7	79.6
	more than 20 hours	28	20.4	20.4	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.7: Average hours spent online per week

Average hours spent online per week

Legend:
- Less then 5 hours
- 5 to 8 hours
- 9 to 12 hours
- 13 to 16 hours
- 17 to 20 hours
- more than 20 hours
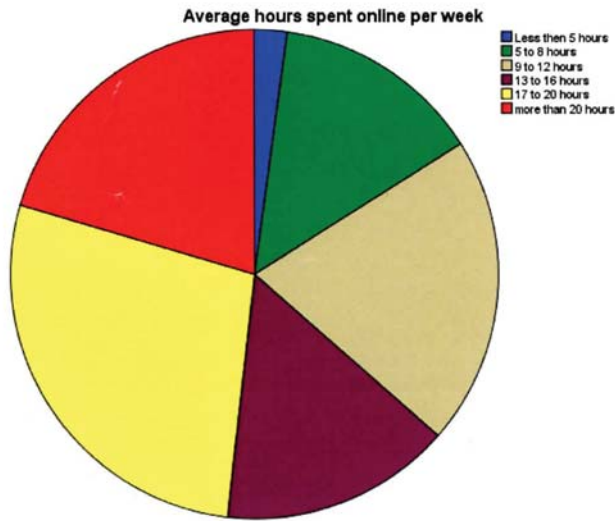
Question 9: Do you usually read food blogs?

Among 137 participants, 122 read food blogs (89.1 %) whereas 15 (10.8%) do not read food
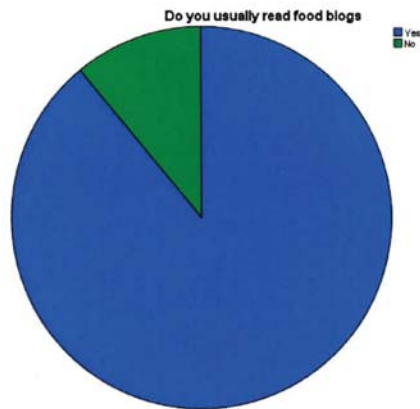
blogs.The results yielded M= 1.11 SD= 0.31

N	Valid	137
	Missing	0
Mean		1.11
Median		1.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.313

Table 2: Do you usually read food blogs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	122	89.1	89.1	89.1
	No	15	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	137	100.0	100.0	

Figure2:Do you usually read food blogs?

Do you usually read food blogs

Question 10: Average time spent on reading food blogs

15responses were missing .The highest percentage (40.9%) participants of the respondents who are food blogger readers spend less than 30 min on reading, While 53 participants spend between 30min to 1 hour (38.7%) and 13 spend 1 to 2 hours (9.5%)The results yielded $M=1.65$ and $SD=0.667$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		1.65
Median		2.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.667

Table 2.1: Average time spent on reading food blogs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 30 min	56	40.9	45.9	45.9
	30min to 1hr	53	38.7	43.4	89.3
	1 to 2 hours	13	9.5	10.7	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.1: Average time spent on reading food blogs

Average time spent on reading food blogs per

- Less than 30 min
- 30min to 1hr
- 1 to 2 hours
- Missing
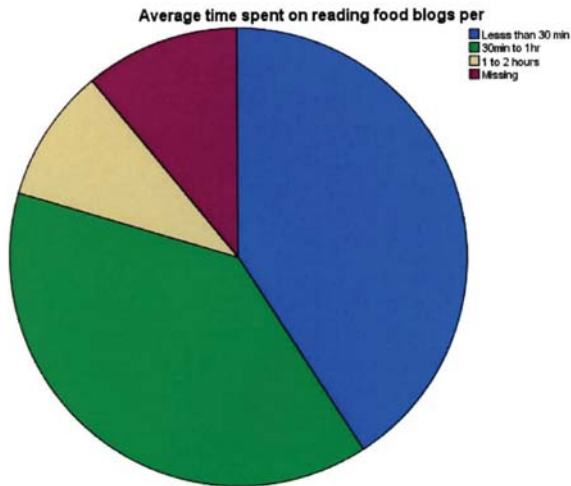
Question 11: What is the purpose of visiting food blogs?

The results provide four purposes for visiting food blogs. 49 participants (35.8%) said that they visit food blogs to read food bloggers advices and recommendation while 12 to share interests (8.8%) and 24 to seek suggestions (17.5%), 26 to find out new trends (19%) whereas 11 To kill time (8%) and 15 were missing .The results yielded M=2.49 SD=1.4

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		2.49
Median		2.50
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		1.427

Table 2.2: what is the purpose of visiting food blogs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Read Bloggers advices and recommendations	49	35.8	40.2	40.2
	Share interests	12	8.8	9.8	50.0
	Seek suggestions	24	17.5	19.7	69.7
	Find out new trends	26	19.0	21.3	91.0
	Kill Time	11	8.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.2: what is the purpose of visiting food blogs?

what is the purpose of visiting food blogs

- Read Bloggers advices and recommendations
- share interests
- seek suggestions
- Find out new trends
- Kill Time
- Missing
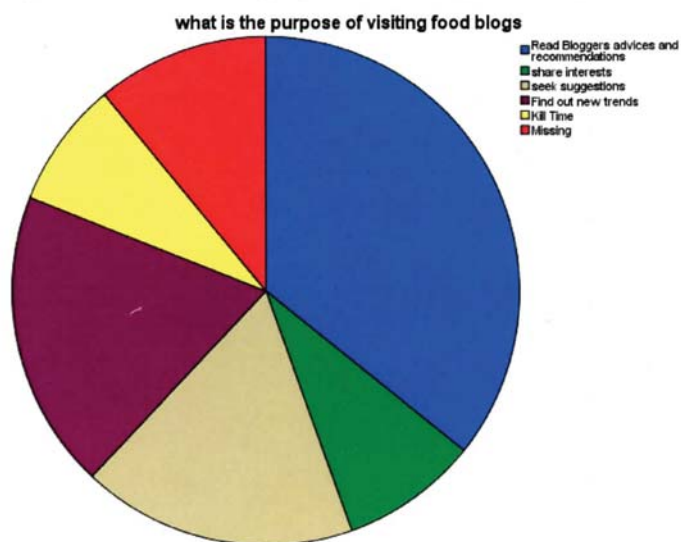
Question 12: Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is interesting.

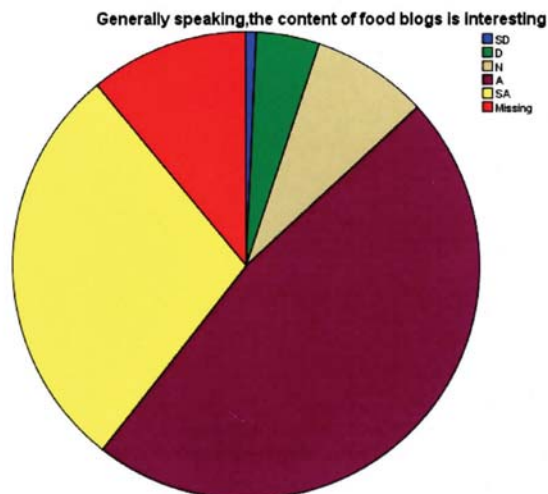65 participants who represent the majority (47.4%) agreed that the content of food blogs is interesting and 39 strongly agreed(28.5%).On the other hand, 1 strongly disagreed (0.7%)and 6 disagreed (4.4) while 11 said neutral (8%) and 15 responses were missing.The results yielded $M=$ 4.11 and $SD=$ 0.82

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		4.11
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.821

Table 2.3: Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is interesting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	1	.7	.8	.8
	D	6	4.4	4.9	5.7
	N	11	8.0	9.0	14.8
	A	65	47.4	53.3	68.0
	SA	39	28.5	32.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.3: Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is interesting

**Question 13:** Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is Credible.

58 participants who represent the majority (42.3%) agreed that the content of food blogs is credible and 16 strongly agreed (11.7%).While 5 strongly disagreed (3.6%) and 18 disagreed (13.1%).25 answered neutral (18.2%) and 15 responses were missing. The results yielded M=3.51 and SD=1.030

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.51
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.030

Table 2.4: Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is credible.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	5	3.6	4.1	4.1
	D	18	13.1	14.8	18.9
	N	25	18.2	20.5	39.3
	A	58	42.3	47.5	86.9
	SA	16	11.7	13.1	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.4: Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is credible.

Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible

SD
D
N
A
SA
Missing
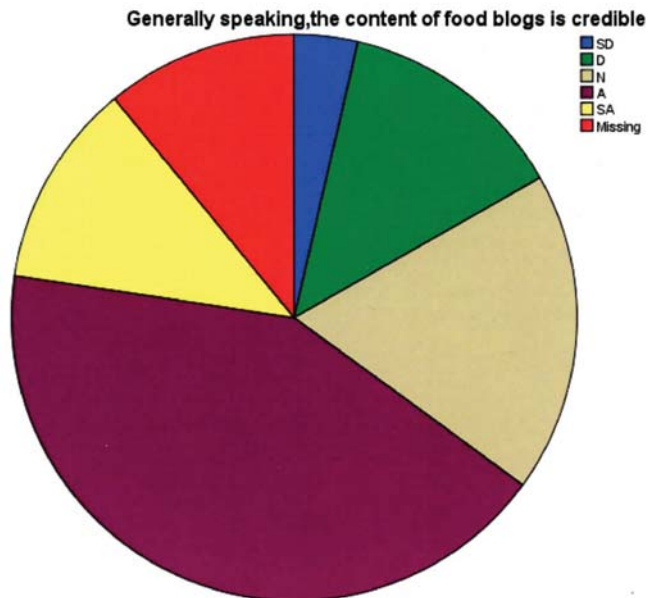
**Question14:** I will read other's response and comments on food blogs.

65 of the participants will read other's response and comments on food blogs quite often (47.4%) and 20 participants will do it always (14.6%) 24 sometimes (17.5%) 12 seldom (8.8%) 1 never (0.7%) and 15 missing answers. The results yielded $M= 3.75$ and $SD= 0.877$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.75
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.877

Table: 2.5 I will read other's response and comments on food blogs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	.7	.8	.8
	Seldom	12	8.8	9.8	10.7
	Sometimes	24	17.5	19.7	30.3
	Quite Often	65	47.4	53.3	83.6
	Always	20	14.6	16.4	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.5: I will read other's response and comments on food blogs
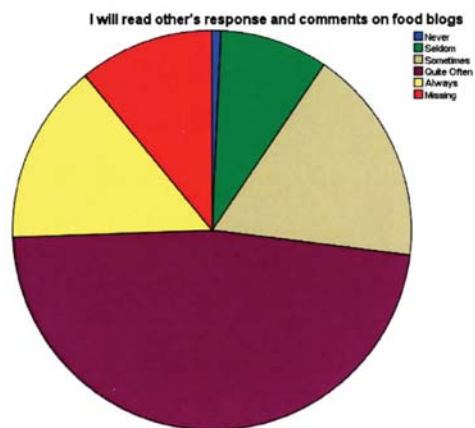
**Question 15:** I will share experience about food on blogs.

11 of the participants (8%) will always share their experience about food through blogs, and 21 quite often (15.3%), 37 sometimes (27%), seldom(7.3%) and 43 never (31.4%) while missing answers were 15.The results yielded $M= 2.57$ and $SD= 1.361$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		2.57
Median		3.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		1.361

Table : 2.6 I will share experience about food on blogs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	43	31.4	35.2	35.2
	Seldom	10	7.3	8.2	43.4
	Sometimes	37	27.0	30.3	73.8
	Quite Often	21	15.3	17.2	91.0
	Always	11	8.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.6:I will share experience about food on blogs.

I will share experience about food on blogs

Legend:
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Quite Often
- Always
- Missing
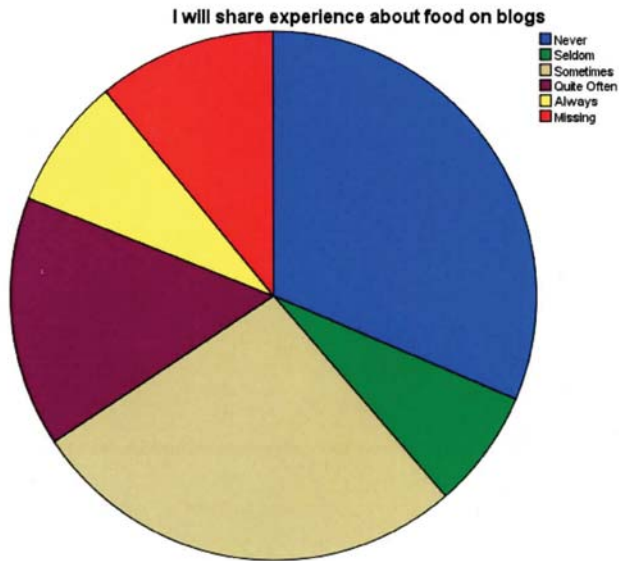
**Question 16**: Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.

56 participants who represent the majority (40.9%) agreed that because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.23 strongly agreed (16.8%).While 6 strongly disagreed (4.4%)and 13 disagreed (9.5%) and 24 said neutral (17.5%) and 15 answers were missing. The results yielded *M*=3.63 and *SD*=1.062

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.63
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.062

Table: 2.7 Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	6	4.4	4.9	4.9
	D	13	9.5	10.7	15.6
	N	24	17.5	19.7	35.2
	A	56	40.9	45.9	81.1
	SA	23	16.8	18.9	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.7: Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.

Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.

- SD
- D
- N
- A
- SA
- Missing
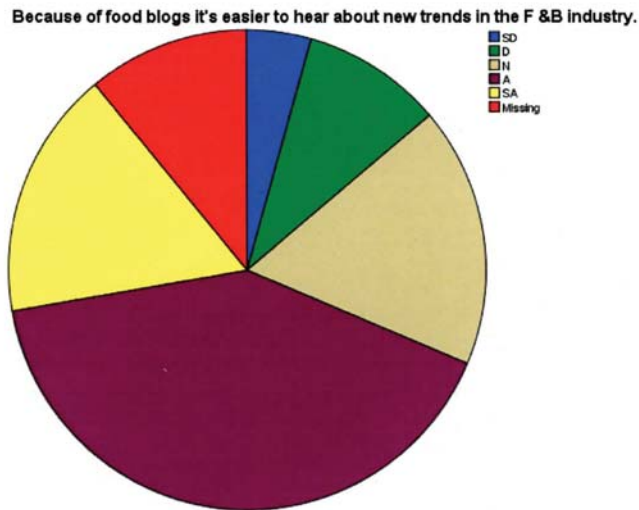
Question 17: Do you agree that food blogs provide a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts

50 participants who represent the majority (36.5%) agreed that food blogs provide a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts. In addition, 28 strongly agreed (20.4%).While 9 strongly disagreed (6.6%), 8 disagreed (5.8%), 27 said neutral (19/7%) and 15 answers were missing. The results yielded M=3.66 and SD=1.126

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.66
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.126

Table: 2.8 Do you agree that food blogs provide a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	9	6.6	7.4	7.4
	D	8	5.8	6.6	13.9
	N	27	19.7	22.1	36.1
	A	50	36.5	41.0	77.0
	SA	28	20.4	23.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.8: Do you agree that food blogs provide a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts?

Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts
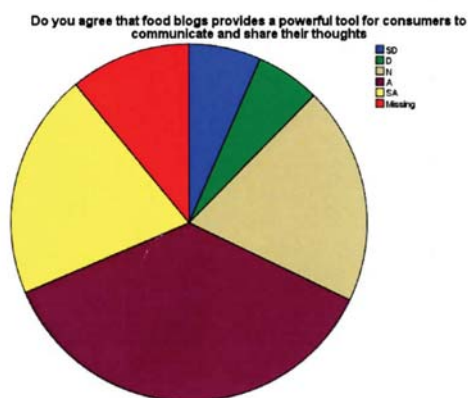
Question 18: Do you think that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or service?

Among the responses 15 were missing 57 participants who represent the majority (41.6%) strongly agreed that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or a service, 40 participants agreed (29.2%).While 1 strongly disagreed (0.7%) 11 disagreed (8%) and 13 said neutral (9.5%)The results yielded *M*=4.16 and *SD*=0.99

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		4.16
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.996

Table 2.9:Do you think that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or service?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	1	.7	.8	.8
	D	11	8.0	9.0	9.8
	N	13	9.5	10.7	20.5
	A	40	29.2	32.8	53.3
	SA	57	41.6	46.7	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.9: Do you think that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or service?

Do you think that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or service
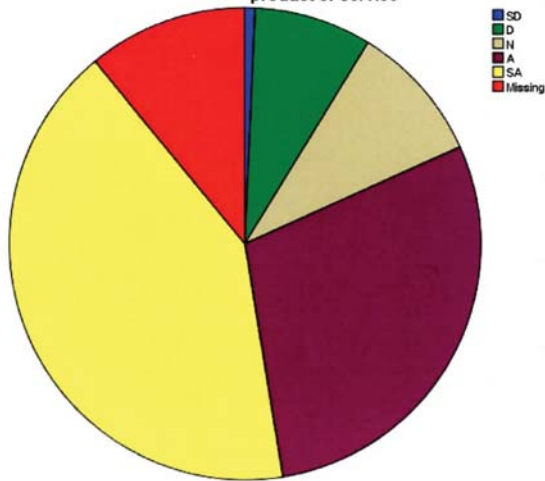
**Question 19:** Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant

The majority of the participants (38 or 27.7%) agreed that photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage them to visit a restaurant and 37 strongly agreed(27%).Whereas 1 strongly disagreed (0.7%), 10 disagreed (7.3%) and 36 stayed neutral (26.3%) and 15 missing answers (10.9%). The results yielded M=3.82 and SD=0.988

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.82
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.988

Table 2.10: Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	1	.7	.8	.8
	D	10	7.3	8.2	9.0
	N	36	26.3	29.5	38.5
	A	38	27.7	31.1	69.7
	SA	37	27.0	30.3	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.10: Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant.

Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restauarant

Legend:
- SD
- D
- N
- A
- SA
- Missing
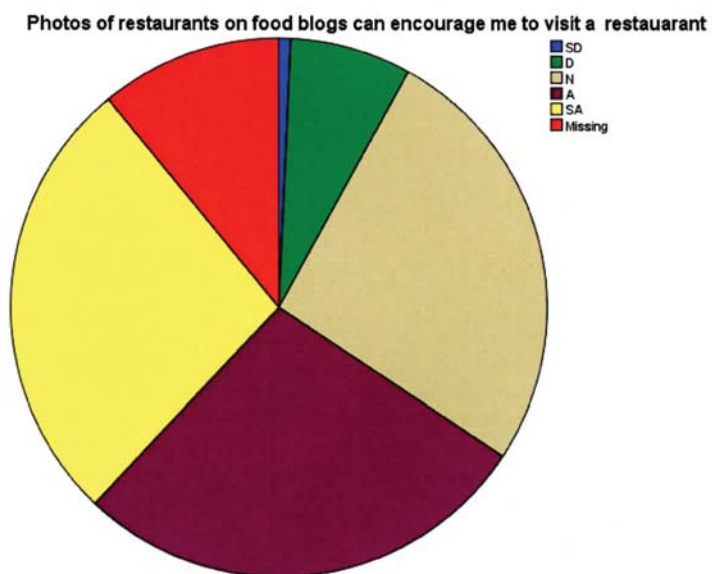
Question 20: Depending on the menu card available on food blogs I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant.
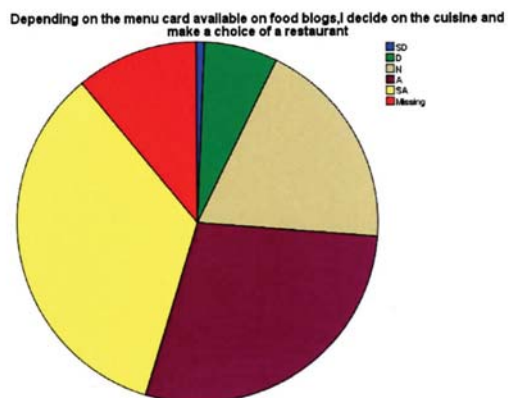
49 participants who represent the majority (34.3%) strongly agreed that depending on the menu card available on food blogs they decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant and 39 agreed(28.5%).While 1 strongly disagreed (0.7%), 9 participants disagreed (6.6%) and 26 (19%) stayed neutral and 15 missing answers. The results yielded $M=4$ and $SD=0.988$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		4.00
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.988

Table 2.11: Depending on the menu card available on food blogs I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	1	.7	.8	.8
	D	9	6.6	7.4	8.2
	N	26	19.0	21.3	29.5
	A	39	28.5	32.0	61.5
	SA	47	34.3	38.5	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.11: Depending on the menu card available on food blogs I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant.

Depending on the menu card available on food blogs,I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant

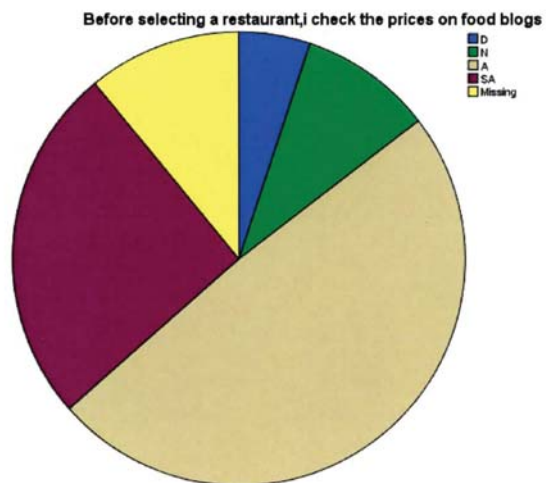**Question 21**: Before selecting a restaurant, check the prices on food blogs

67 participants who represent the majority (48.9%) agreed that Before selecting a restaurant, i check the prices on food blogs and 35 strongly agreed(25.5%).While7 strongly disagreed (5.1%)and 7 disagreed (5.1%) and 13 said neutral and 15 missing answers (18.2%)The results yielded $M=4$ and $SD=0.790$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		4.07
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.790

Table 2.12: Before selecting a restaurant, check the prices on food blogs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	D	7	5.1	5.7	5.7
	N	13	9.5	10.7	16.4
	A	67	48.9	54.9	71.3
	SA	35	25.5	28.7	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 2.12: Before selecting a restaurant, do you check the prices on food blogs?

Question 22: Do you visit food blogs for selecting a restaurant?

56 participants who represent the majority (40.9%) agreed that visit food blogs for selecting a restaurant, 50 answered sometimes (36.5%) whereas 16 said no (11.7%)The results yielded $M=1.95$ and $SD=0.935$

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		1.95
Median		2.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.935

Table 3: Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	56	40.9	45.9	45.9
	No	16	11.7	13.1	59.0
	Sometimes	50	36.5	41.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure: 3. Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant?

Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Missing
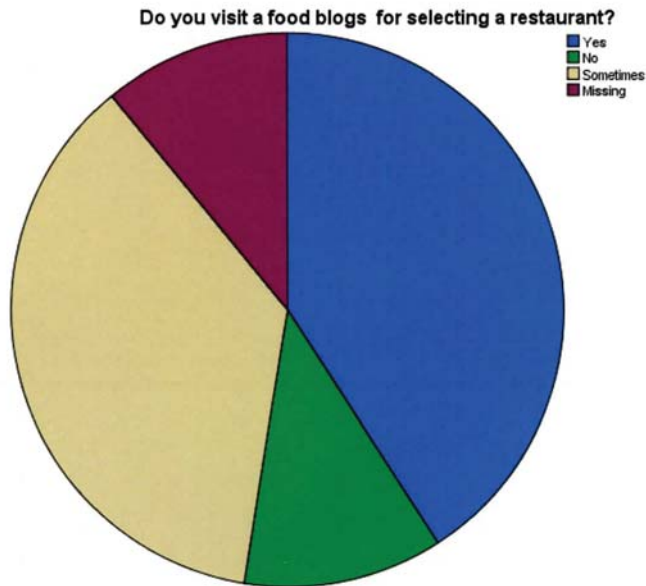
Question 23: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision

59 participants who represent the majority (43.1%) agreed that food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help them to make decisionand 22 strongly agreed(16.1%).While 5 strongly disagreed (3.6%), 10 disagreed (7.3%) and 26 said (19%) neutral and 15 missing answers (10.9%)The results yielded M=3.6 and SD=0.998

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		3.68
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.998

Table 3.1:I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SD	5	3.6	4.1	4.1
	D	10	7.3	8.2	12.3
	N	26	19.0	21.3	33.6
	A	59	43.1	48.4	82.0
	SA	22	16.1	18.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 3.1 I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision.

I think food bloggers' personnal experiences and recommendation on food blogs
can help me to make decision

Legend:
- SD
- D
- N
- A
- SA
- Missing
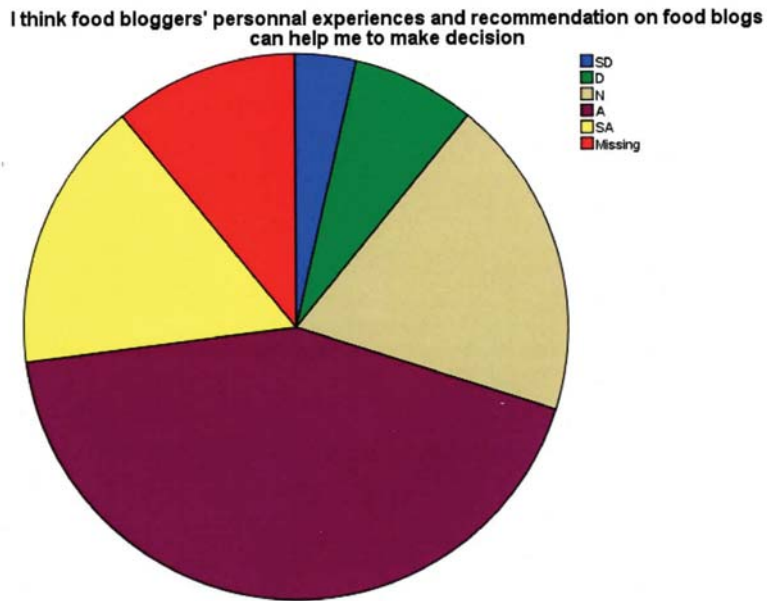
Question 24: Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?

58 of the participants (42.3%) are willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews and 50 are not sure (36.5%) whereas 14 said no (10.2%) and 15 answers were missing. The results yielded M=1.93 and SD=0.942

N	Valid	122
	Missing	15
Mean		1.93
Median		2.00
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		.942

Table 3.2: Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	58	42.3	47.5	47.5
	No	14	10.2	11.5	59.0
	Not Sure	50	36.5	41.0	100.0
	Total	122	89.1	100.0	
Missing	System	15	10.9		
Total		137	100.0		

Figure 3.2 Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?

Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?

■ Yes
■ No
□ Not Sure
■ Missing
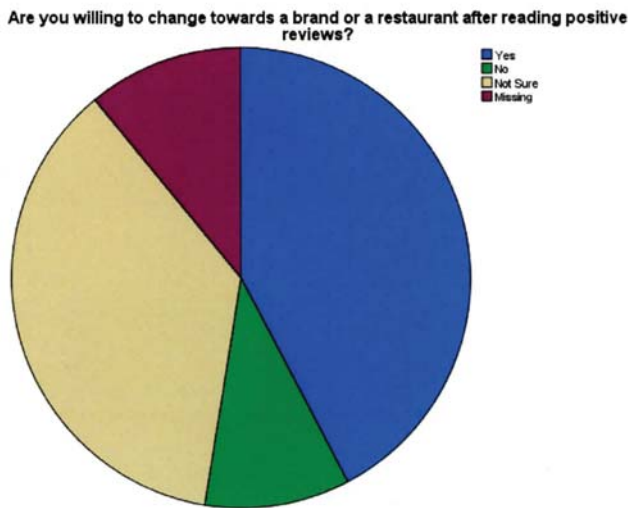
Based on the questionnaire, the age of the respondents is ranged between 18 and 38 .The majority of the respondents were single , Lebanese females who have completed a bachelor degree, who are employed and earning more than 28000$/year. Among 137 participants, 122 were food blog readers and 53.3% of them read others' responses and comments posted on food blogs while 47.4% agreed and 28.5 % strongly agreed that food blogs' content is interesting which indicates that the food blog concept is understood and accepted by Lebanese consumers.

5.2.2 Data Analysis: Testing hypothesis

In order to answer the research questions mentioned previously and to test the hypothesis cross tabulation, Chi Square correlations and regression tests were conducted.

The first cross tabulation is done between "average time spent online per week" and "do you usually read blogs". 20.4% of respondents spend more than 20 hours online and the results show that all of them read food blogs. As found in the previous section the majority of respondents

spend time online between 17 and 20 hours (27.7%) where it also yielded the highest percentage 24.8% who read food blogs while 2.9% do not read food blogs. Plus, 14.6% of those who spend time between 13 and 16 hours read blogs, 15.3% who spend 9-12 read food blogs.

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2$ = 10.77; df= 5; p= 0.56) (Table 4.1). P> 0.05 which means that there is no significant relationship between time spent online and whether they read food blogs.

Table 4.Cross Tabulation 1

Average hours spent online per week * Do you usually read food blogs Crosstabulation

			Do you usually read food blogs		Total
			Yes	No	
Average hours spent online per week	Less than 5 hours	Count	3	0	3
		% of Total	2.2%	0.0%	2.2%
	5 to 8 hours	Count	16	3	19
		% of Total	11.7%	2.2%	13.9%
	9 to 12 hours	Count	21	7	28
		% of Total	15.3%	5.1%	20.4%
	13 to 16 hours	Count	20	1	21
		% of Total	14.6%	0.7%	15.3%
	17 to 20 hours	Count	34	4	38
		% of Total	24.8%	2.9%	27.7%
	more than 20 hours	Count	28	0	28
		% of Total	20.4%	0.0%	20.4%
Total		Count	122	15	137
		% of Total	89.1%	10.9%	100.0%

Table 4.1:Chi-Square test 1

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.769[a]	5	.056
Likelihood Ratio	12.973	5	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.491	1	.034
N of Valid Cases	137		

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .33.

The second cross tabulation is done between "what is the purpose of visiting food blogs " and" Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant". The majority of participants (40.2%) visit food blogs to read bloggers advices and recommendations among them 18% visit a food blogs to select a restaurant and 20.5% sometimes while only 1.6 % read bloggers recommendation but do not visit a food blogs when it comes to choosing a restaurant .moreover the results yielded none of the participant who read food blogs to kill time will visit a food blog to select a restaurant .Additionally, 21.3 % use food blogs to find out new trends where 13.9% among them visit food blogs before selecting a restaurant.In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2$ = 89.44; d8= 5; p= 0.) (Table 4.3). P< 0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between the purpose of visiting a food blog and whether before selecting a restaurant respondents rely on food blogs.

Table 4.2: Cross Tabulation 2

What is the purpose of visiting food blogs * Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant? Crosstabulation

			Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant?			Total
			Yes	No	Sometimes	
hat is the purpose of siting food blogs	Read Bloggers advices and recommendations	Count	22	2	25	49
		% of Total	18.0%	1.6%	20.5%	40.2%
	share interests	Count	8	1	3	12
		% of Total	6.6%	0.8%	2.5%	9.8%
	seek suggestions	Count	9	0	15	24
		% of Total	7.4%	0.0%	12.3%	19.7%
	Find out new trends	Count	17	2	7	26
		% of Total	13.9%	1.6%	5.7%	21.3%
	Kill Time	Count	0	11	0	11
		% of Total	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%	9.0%
tal		Count	56	16	50	122
		% of Total	45.9%	13.1%	41.0%	100.0%

Table 4.3 Chi Square Tests 2

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	89.438[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	65.134	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.917	1	.338
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.44.

The third cross tabulation is done between "Average time spent on reading food blogs" and "Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is credible"

The majority of the participants said that they spend time on reading blogs less than 30 min (45.9%)among them 22.1 % agreed that the content is credible and 3.3% strongly agreed whereas 10.7% disagreed and 3.3% strongly disagreed while 6.6% said neutral.

The participants who spend time on reading blogs between 30 min to 1 hour (43.4%) 23 % agreed that the content is credible and 7.4% strongly agreed whereas none of them strongly disagreed and 2.5 % disagreed while 10.7%said neutral.

On the other hand, participants who spend time on reading blogs less between 1 to 2 hours (10.7%) 2.5 % agreed that the content is credible and 2.5% strongly agreed whereas 1.6% disagreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed while 3.3% said neutral.

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2 = 16.77$; df= 8; p= 0.33) (Table 4.5). P<0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between spending time and the credibility of the blog

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Table 4.4 Cross Tabulation 3

Average time spent on reading food blogs * Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible Crosstabulation

			Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible					Total
			SD	D	N	A	SA	
Average time spent on reading food blogs	Less than 30 min	Count	4	13	8	27	4	56
		% of Total	3.3%	10.7%	6.6%	22.1%	3.3%	45.9%
	30min to 1hr	Count	0	3	13	28	9	53
		% of Total	0.0%	2.5%	10.7%	23.0%	7.4%	43.4%
	1 to 2 hours	Count	1	2	4	3	3	13
		% of Total	0.8%	1.6%	3.3%	2.5%	2.5%	10.7%
Total		Count	5	18	25	58	16	122
		% of Total	4.1%	14.8%	20.5%	47.5%	13.1%	100.0%

Table 4.5 Chi Square Test 3

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.748[a]	8	.033
Likelihood Ratio	19.572	8	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.889	1	.089
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .53.

The fourth cross tabulation is done between "Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry." And " Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant? "The

majority of respondents agreed that because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry(45.9%) among them 20.5 %visit blogs to select a restaurant,20.5% sometime while 4.9% even though they hear about trends though food blogs but they do not visit a blog for selecting a restaurants on the other hand , the minority who strongly disagreed that though food blogs you can hear about new trends do not visit food blogs for selecting a restaurant (3.3% sometimes, 1.6% no and 0% yes)

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2 = 3402$; df= 8; p= 0) (Table 4.7). P<0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between hearing new trends through blogs and visiting blogs to select a restaurant.

Table 4.6 Cross tabulation 4

Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry. * Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant? Crosstabulation

			Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant?			Total
			Yes	No	Sometimes	
Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry.	SD	Count	0	2	4	6
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	3.3%	4.9%
	D	Count	1	1	11	13
		% of Total	0.8%	0.8%	9.0%	10.7%
	N	Count	12	7	5	24
		% of Total	9.8%	5.7%	4.1%	19.7%
	A	Count	25	6	25	56
		% of Total	20.5%	4.9%	20.5%	45.9%
	SA	Count	18	0	5	23
		% of Total	14.8%	0.0%	4.1%	18.9%
Total		Count	56	16	50	122
		% of Total	45.9%	13.1%	41.0%	100.0%

Table 4.7: Chi Square tests 4

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.026[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	38.736	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.571	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .79.

After studying the relationship between different variables, regression analysis will be used to test hypothesis 1: *Credible food blogger's recommendation will positively affect Lebanese consumer's perception.*

The independent variable is credible food blogger recommendation where the dependent variable is Lebanese consumer's perception. Therefore 2 statements from the questionnaire will be used "Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is credible" and "I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision" and since the two statement were measured using Likert scale so they are considered to be continuous variable that should be analyzed using regression.

The results suggest: (b= .606,SE=.252,p<.001,r=.625, r^2 =.391)

The hypothesis is significant since p=.000 so we can conclude that the hypothesis is supported. As the credibility of food blog content increases the decision making increases by .606.Additionally there is a correlation between the 2 variables (.625) and the credibility of blogs explains 39% of the variation of the decision making.

Table 4.8 : Regression 1

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision
b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.625[a]	.391	.386	.782

a. Predictors: (Constant), Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.131	1	47.131	77.051	.000[b]
	Residual	73.402	120	.612		
	Total	120.533	121			

a. Dependent Variable: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.556	.252		6.168	.000
	Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible	.606	.069	.625	8.778	.000

a. Dependent Variable: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision

Table 4.9: Correlation 1

			Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible	I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision
Spearman's rho	Generally speaking,the content of food blogs is credible	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.526**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	122	122
	I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision	Correlation Coefficient	.526**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	122	122

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to test the second hypothesis: sharing knowledge and images through food blogs has a positive impact in shaping Lebanese consumer' perception the following cross tabulation, Chi Square , correlations and regression will be done.

The first cross tabulation is done between "Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant" and "Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews''. The majority of the respondents agreed (31.1%)that Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant among them 13.1 are willing to change after reading a positive review and 15.5% are not sure. Additionally, 30.3% strongly agreed that

Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage them to visit a restaurant among them 19.7% are willing to change after reading positive reviews and 10.7% are not sure.

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2 = 64.02$; df= 8; p= 0) (Table 5.1). P<0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between the photos posted and decision changing.

Table 5 Cross tabulation 5

Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant * Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews? Cross tabulation

			Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?			Total
			Yes	No	Not Sure	
Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant	SD	Count	0	1	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
	D	Count	0	8	2	10
		% of Total	0.0%	6.6%	1.6%	8.2%
	N	Count	18	2	16	36
		% of Total	14.8%	1.6%	13.1%	29.5%
	A	Count	16	3	19	38
		% of Total	13.1%	2.5%	15.6%	31.1%
	SA	Count	24	0	13	37
		% of Total	19.7%	0.0%	10.7%	30.3%
Total		Count	58	14	50	122
		% of Total	47.5%	11.5%	41.0%	100.0%

Table 5.1Chi-Square tests 5

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	64.017[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	46.375	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.990	1	.158
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 9 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

The second cross tabulation is done between "Depending on the menu card available on food blogsi decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant and "Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews"

The majority of the respondents strongly agreed (38.5%)that menu available on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant among them 23.8% are willing to change after reading a positive review and 14.8% are not sure.

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2 = 70.10$; df= 8; p= 0) (Table 5.4). P<0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between the menu posted and decision changing .

Table 5.2 Cross tabulation 6

Depending on the menu card available on food blogs,i decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant * Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews? Crosstabulation

			Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?			Total
			Yes	No	Not Sure	
Depending on the menu card available on food blogs,I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant	SD	Count	0	1	0	1
		% of Total	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
	D	Count	0	8	1	9
		% of Total	0.0%	6.6%	0.8%	7.4%
	N	Count	12	2	12	26
		% of Total	9.8%	1.6%	9.8%	21.3%
	A	Count	17	3	19	39
		% of Total	13.9%	2.5%	15.6%	32.0%
	SA	Count	29	0	18	47
		% of Total	23.8%	0.0%	14.8%	38.5%
Total		Count	58	14	50	122
		% of Total	47.5%	11.5%	41.0%	100.0%

Table 5.3 Chi-Square Tests 6

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	70.100[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	48.916	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.612	1	.204
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

Table 5.4 Correlation 2

Correlations			I will share experience about food on blogs	Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant	Depending on the menu card available on food blogs,i decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant
ontrol Variables					
e you willing to change vards a brand or a restaurant er reading positive reviews?	I will share experience about food on blogs	Correlation	1.000	.606	.504
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		df	0	119	119
	Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant	Correlation	.606	1.000	.837
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		df	119	0	119
	Depending on the menu card available on food blogs,i decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant	Correlation	.504	.837	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		df	119	119	0

The third cross tabulation is done between "Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts and "Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews"

The results yielded that among 47.5% who are willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews 21.3% agreed and 16.4% that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts.

In addition, a Chi-square test was examined and yielded ($\chi2$ = 92.33; df= 8; p= 0) (Table 5.6). P<0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between sharing thoughts and decision changing.

Table 5.5 Cross tabulation 7

Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts * Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews? Crosstabulation

			Are you willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews?			Total
			Yes	No	Not Sure	
Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts	SD	Count	1	8	0	9
		% of Total	0.8%	6.6%	0.0%	7.4%
	D	Count	1	5	2	8
		% of Total	0.8%	4.1%	1.6%	6.6%
	N	Count	10	1	16	27
		% of Total	8.2%	0.8%	13.1%	22.1%
	A	Count	26	0	24	50
		% of Total	21.3%	0.0%	19.7%	41.0%
	SA	Count	20	0	8	28
		% of Total	16.4%	0.0%	6.6%	23.0%
Total		Count	58	14	50	122
		% of Total	47.5%	11.5%	41.0%	100.0%

Table 5.6 Chi-Square Tests 7

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	92.339[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	69.452	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.861	1	.091
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .92.

Hypothesis two: *Hypothesis two: Sharing knowledge, experiences and images through food blogs has a positive impact in shaping Lebanese consumer's perception.*

After studying the relationship between different variables , regression analysis will be used to test hypothesis 2: *Sharing knowledge, experiences and images through food blogs has a positive impact in shaping Lebanese consumer's perception .*

The independent variable is where the independent variable is sharing knowledge, experiences and images through food blogs and dependent variable is the Lebanese consumer's perception. Therefore 2 statements from the questionnaire will be used : "Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts "and "I think food and bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision " since the two statement were measured using Likert scale so they are considered to be continuous variable that should be analyzed using regression. The results suggest: (b= .590,SE=.060,p<.001,r=.666, r^2 =.449)The hypothesis is significant since p=.000 so we can conclude that the hypothesis is supported. As sharing thoughts in food blogs increases the decision making increases by .606.Additionally there is a correlation between the 2 variables (.666) and sharing thoughts explains 44% of the variation of the decision making.

Table 5.7 Regression 2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.666[a]	.443	.439	.748

a. Predictors: (Constant), Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.429	1	53.429	95.547	.000[b]
	Residual	67.103	120	.559		
	Total	120.533	121			

a. Dependent Variable: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.524	.231		6.603	.000
	Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts	.590	.060	.666	9.775	.000

a. Dependent Variable: I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation on food blogs can help me to make decision

5.3 Discussion

The findings of this paper were based on both qualitative and quantitative data and they provide several important insights.

Based on the survey people visit blogs for several purposes therefore blogs are providing several opportunities to the consumers. The majority of the participants visit blogs to read bloggers' advices and recommendations (35.8%) where 17.5% seek suggestion , 8.8% share interests and others to find out new trends 19 while others and 11% to kill time. Yet, the first cross tabulation was not significant which means reading food blogs is not related to the average time spent online.

Dr. Rahayel also illustrates that his blog offers several benefits for Lebanese consumers and for the F & B industry. On the consumer level, it gives a direction on where to go what to order, what to expect and he sheds the light on the newest places in town. While he gives recommendation for the restaurants on what to improve or change. While Mr. Baroudi , a restaurant owner also agreed that a positive review can upgrade the image of a restaurant and lead to tangible sales.

Another cross tabulation was done between the purpose of visiting food blog and whether individuals visit food blogs in order to select a restaurant. Among those who visit food blogs for selecting a restaurant, the highest percentage yielded for those who read the recommendations which means that people who seek information and recommendation will visit the blogs to select a restaurant.

While the cross tabulation that was done between the two following statements "Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F &B industry" and "Do you visit a food blogs for selecting a restaurant" revealed that among people who visit blogs to select a restaurant (45.9%) , 20.5 % agreed and 14.8% strongly agreed that through food blogs it's easier to her about new trends in the F&B industry. This highlighted the concept that food blogs could be used as a powerful tool to promote gastronomic trends and news.

Hypothesis one: Credible food blogger's recommendations will positively Lebanese consumer's perception.

Both interviewees emphasize on the food blogger's credibility: Dr. Rhayel clarified the meaning of a food blog, explained how to be credible and emphasized that credibility is the key for a food blogger's success and it occurs by providing mature and objective comments. On the other hand, Mr. Baroudi also mentioned the credibility concept and agreed that a credible food blogger could have an impact on the Lebanese consumers. Additionally, 58 participants who represent the majority (42.3%) agreed that the content of food blogs is credible and 16 strongly agreed (11.7%). Plus, 42.3 % are willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews. In addition, as mentioned in the previous section a regression analysis was done to evaluate the significance of the hypothesis.

Hypothesis two: Sharing knowledge, experiences and images through food blogs has a positive impact in shaping Lebanese consumer's perception.

Based on the quantitative data, 67 participants who represent the majority (48.9%) agreed that before selecting a restaurant, they check the prices on food blogs and 35 strongly agreed(25.5%).

Plus 47.5% are willing to change towards a brand or a restaurant after reading positive reviews, among them: 19.7% strongly agreed and 13.1% agreed that photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant while 23.8 % strongly agreed and 13 said that they can base their decision depending on the menu cards. Finally 21.3% agreed and 16.4 % strongly agreed that food blogs provide a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and share their thoughts.

Hence, as mentioned in the previous section, there was a significant correlation between both variables and the hypothesis was accepted.

Finally we can conclude that people rely on food blogs due to several effective features such as, finding new trends and gaining knowledge in the gastronomic sector which is an essential part of our daily routine. Additionally, food blogs provide Lebanese consumers with credible recommendations led by professional and knowledgeable individuals. Therefore food blogs are considered to be a major player having a big influential role in shaping Lebanese consumers' perception to restaurants and the like.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

Nowadays, with the widespread use of the internet and advancement in technology, consumers have taken control aiming for a global communication and better relationships.

In the early 2000s, blogs began to appear and their number has progressively increased while the society becoming more established and people becoming more engaged. Blogosphere is one type of social media that is fast growing. Thus, blogs have become a global phenomenon.

Fundamentally, the central aim of this study is to generate more knowledge about the impact of food blogs in shaping Lebanese consumers' brand perception in the food and beverage sector.

This study showed that food goes beyond the necessity of life, and its popularity as a societal trend has continued to increase. Yet, food blogs have emerged as a vital medium to share and exchange information about gastronomic news. Since the number of food blogs has increased and food blogging industry continues to grow exponentially, consumers now are being able to experience food blogs whether online or through consuming the tangible outcomes of blogs shared by friends or family. Therefore, food blogs have brought profound changes and impact on Lebanese consumers and businesses.

As described in a Social Media Influence article, "… bloggers are not musing wanna be writers, but individuals active and respected in their fields." On the other hand, consumers

perceive the information provided by other people to be credible and trustworthy (Pornpitakpan 2004). Moreover, one of the research's objective was to highlight the changes food blogs brought to consumers in each stage of their decision making process. Hence, when consumers want to take a decision regarding which restaurant to select, food blogs influence each step of the buyer's decision process. The findings of this study demonstrate that Lebanese consumers perceive food blogs as an information source to fulfill a certain interest and need. Thus, food blogs could be a useful tool for knowledge acquisition and reflection processes. In addition, this may be achievable since bloggers can easily access unlimited resources via the internet to discover whatever they need and express their opinions and advices through insightful writing on blogs. Consequently, consumers have the ability through food blogs, to compare between restaurants, products and services and then make their purchase decision. Consequently, consumers can loudly express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction about their experience and share their knowledge and opinions online noting that consumers 'perception is based on the information obtained hence, indeed, food bloggers influence readers to follow their recommendations. Therefore, food blogs can change consumers' perception and even impact every step of the consumers' purchasing decision process to a different extent. The reasons are mainly because blogs have many features such as bringing convenience to consumers choose what and when to read, and it allows them to react and interact with other individuals.

To sum up, Alison Vincent (2014) believes that restaurant critics which provide judgments to a large audience play a vital role in shaping consumers' perception. Hence, food blogs based on certain characteristics such as interactivity, providing visual content and experience exchange can also help in generating a world of mouth that will lead to build a brand's identity and personality.

Thus, food blogs can provide benefits for both Lebanese consumers and the food and beverage sector as a whole. As an example, food blogs can help to promote trends and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, a blog review can create wonders to the business; build a community and engage with the customers and will help them to understand their need and wants.

Finally, since food blogs are reshaping the way consumers eat, it is also driving a change in the F & B sector. A single post or review can affect a business' reputation which in turn may lead to its success or failure. Therefore, companies must be aware of the influence of food bloggers and they should learn how to build relationships with them to reflect positively on their brand image and to benefit from blogs' use as a marketing tool to strengthen their brand.

6.2 Limitations of this research

This study has provided greater insights regarding the food blogs impact in shaping the Lebanese consumers' brand perception. Nevertheless, there are several concerns that need to be borne in mind when reading the results of this study. Accordingly, the quantitative and the qualitative methods used in this study have several limitations.

Firstly, it is conducted in Lebanon, so it will be difficult or even impossible to apply the findings of this study globally or to generalize the results to another community which will threaten the external validity.

Secondly, the sample size is relatively small (N= 137) with an unbalanced gender split with a majority of females which may lead to an impact limitation .In other words, based on this research food blogs could affect female more than male.

Moreover, because survey is used as a tool to conduct this study therefore we cannot establish causality.

There were also difficulties in finding similar studies, or studies talking about food blogs in impact in Lebanon.

Finally, even though this study provides several important findings and outcomes of food bloggers, many variables could be missing such as how to create a food blog or how to choose which blog to follow.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Concerning time and scope of this research, many interesting subjects were covered but in general perspective so as to provide a big picture for the readers. So, this exploratory study has more rooms for improvement and it creates a baseline for future research.

Therefore, future researches could conduct this study on other sample especially that the level of influence that food bloggers exert over their followers may depend on the age of the blog reader and the level of knowledge that the reader possess, hence further research is required to compare different groups of consumers and expanded to a larger sampling size or geographical area that would give a more dependable and generalized result. And adding open ended questions would be more beneficial.

Additionally, this study should be examined later on, after a period of time to check if it will lead to the same findings knowing that the technology is rapidly increasing and providing new tools.

This study was strictly concerned with food blogs so other product categories need to be explored to see if our findings are transferable in a different context.

Further research should be conducted on the companies' level in order to get a better understanding of the transition from traditional marketing to the new marketing and how organizations can capitalize using blogs.

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Appendix 1

The questions of the interview with Mr. Anthony Rhayel the Lebanese food blogger are as following:

1) Can you tell us about your blog? How did you start? And why it is called "no garlic no onions"?

2) Why did you choose food and beverage as a main topic to discuss? What inspired you to write a food blog?

3) Why are you impassioned about eating in a restaurant?

4) Who do represent and who are your readers?

5) What is your main purpose through blogging?

6) What do you think about sharing product information about food and beverage with others online?

7) How do you choose a restaurant or a place to visit and give your advices?

8) Do you have a specific type of cuisine that you are interested in?

9) Do you feel a pressure while commenting and criticizing a place that the owner is your friend?'

10) You do not like a particular dish at your favorite restaurant, what will you do?

11) How frequently do you update the materials on your blog?

12) You have good photography skills? Did you take some courses?

13) Why do you think Lebanese consumers are reading your reviews and recommendation?

14) Do you have a special post that was considered a boom?

15) Do you intend to influence Lebanese readers through your experience and recommendation?

16) Your blog is becoming popular recently and lots of people are using your advices and recommendation did you know that it was going to be such a hit when you start?

17) Are you happy with the outcome?

18) Are you willing to expend from blog to a business?

19) What do you think the future of food blogging will be?

Appendix 2

You can find hereunder the questions of the interview with Mr. Walid Baroudi are as following:

1. Do you usually read food blogs?

2. How did you start reading blogs? Did anyone in your surrounding inspire you or did you start reading blogs through other ways i.e. through Google?

3. Do you read the text in the blog or are you more interested in images and photos?

4. What do you search for in the food blogs that you read?

5. Have you ever changed your attitude, regarding a specific product or service, from negative to positive based on a bloggers opinion or statement?

6. How do you think a blogger persuades you to create a certain purchase intention?

7. Are there bloggers who you trust more than others? If yes, why do you trust a certain blogger and what makes you distrust another blogger?

8. Whose opinion do you value the most, a friends' or a bloggers' when you have an intention of purchasing a product? Explain why.

9. As an owner of the peninsula restaurant what are the marketing strategies that you are using to promote your restaurant?

10. Have you been affected by a positive review?

11. Have you been affected by a negative review? if yes how did you deal with it?

12. In your opinion, what is the importance of food blogs in the Lebanese F& B sector?

13. Do you think food blogs affect Lebanese consumers?

14. Why do you think bloggers have a strong influence on people's purchase intentions?

15. Why do you think blogs have become such a big phenomenon?

16. Do you consider food blogs as an effective tool of marketing?

Appendix 3

Kindly take some time (approximately 10 to 15 minutes) to complete this questionnaire. You do not have to complete this survey if you do not wish to do so. However, everyone's views are important and the more participation I receive, the better the results will be. Please note that this questionnaire is completely confidential.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age:

3. Social Status ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced

4. Residency:

   ☐ North Lebanon   ☐ South Lebanon

   ☐ Greater Beirut   ☐ Mount Lebanon ☐ Bekaa

5. Education:

   ☐ Basic education   ☐ High school level

   ☐ BA/BS Graduate   ☐ MA/MS Graduate

6. Occupation:

   ☐ Employee   ☐ Unemployed

   ☐ Student   ☐ Own Private Business

7. Average Income per year:

   ☐ Less than 12000$ ☐ 12001-20000

   ☐ 20001-28000 ☐ More than 28001$

8. Average hours spent online per week:

   ☐ Less than 5 hours   ☐ 5 to 8 hours   ☐ 9 to 12 hours

   ☐ 13 to 16 hours   ☐ 17 to 20 hours ☐ more than 20 hours

9. Do you usually read food blogs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If the answer is yes please proceed with the questionnaire, if the answer is no please stop.

10. Average time spent on reading food blogs?

☐ Less than 30 min ☐ 30 min to 1 hour ☐ 1 to 2 hours

☐ 2 to 3 hours ☐ More than 3 hours

11. What is the purpose of visiting food blogs?

☐ Read bloggers advices and recommendations ☐ share interests ☐ seek suggestions

☐ Found out new trends ☐ to kill time

12. Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is interesting.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐ Agree

13. Generally speaking, the content of food blogs is credible.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐ Agree

14. I will read other's response and comment on food blogs.

☐ Never ☐ Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Quite Often ☐ Always

15. I would share experience about food through blogs.

☐ Never ☐ Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Quite Often ☐ Always

16. Because of food blogs it's easier to hear about new trends in the F&B industry.

☐ Never ☐ Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Quite Often ☐ Always

17. Do you agree that food blogs provides a powerful tool for consumers to communicate and

share their thoughts?

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐Agree

18. Do you think that with food blogs you are able to seek information regarding a product or service?

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐ Agree

19. Photos of restaurants on food blogs can encourage me to visit a restaurant .

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐Agree

20. Depending on the menu card available on food blogs , I decide on the cuisine and make a choice of a restaurant.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐gree

21. Before selecting a restaurant, I check the prices on food blogs

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree Strongly ☐gree

22. Do you visit food blogs for selecting a restaurant?

☐ Yes   ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

23. I think food bloggers' personal experiences and recommendation can help me to make decision.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐Neutral ☐Agree Strongly ☐Agree

24. Are you willing to change towards a brand or restaurant after reading positive reviews?

☐ Yes   ☐No ☐ Not sure

Thank you for your valuable participation!

Table of figures