

## **Savoring Influence: An Arts-Based Analysis of Food and Wellness Influencers' Instagram Reels**

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In a digital landscape increasingly influenced by social media, Instagram has become a significant platform for shaping consumer behavior, particularly through influencers. With over 1.4 billion monthly active users in 2024 (Dixon, 2023), Instagram Reels allow influencers to impact public perceptions around dietary choices and well-being. Research indicates that 69% of consumers trust influencers' recommendations, significantly affecting purchasing behavior (Deyo, 2023). Despite the documented influence of social media, limited studies focus specifically on the content influencers create regarding food and health. This study aimed to investigate how influencers frame nutrition messaging in their Reels and the responses from their followers, amid rising concerns about the implications of such content on public health.

Participants were identified by searching Instagram using hashtags like #wellnesscoach, #nutritioncoach, and #healthcoach, focusing on public accounts with at least ten food-related Reels. The lead researcher utilized a personal account, acknowledging potential biases from Instagram's search algorithm (Mosseri, 2021). Using visual content-analysis research questions were developed to understand the key messages nutrition influencers communicate in their Instagram Reels and the visuals they predominately feature. Data collection involved capturing the first two food-related Reels from selected accounts in April 2024, including comments from followers. The Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA) method was employed for data analysis, which involves six systematic steps to efficiently manage and interpret video data (Fazeli, Sabetti, Ferrari, 2023). This analysis categorized the content based on characteristics such as visual elements, messages, and the emotional discourse presented in the Reels.

Most Reels revolved their content around food visuals. Those who focused on "debunking" myths and stitching with other creators did not always show food or ingredients in their Reels. The simplest and shortest of Reels were recipes shared with viewers, and the longest provided substantial information about ingredients in food products in grocery stores and introduced a how-to on a type of eating. Of these Reels, no user utilized the terms agriculture or farming, and only one Reel used the term organic which was not expected. Ten of sixteen were speaking directly to the camera.

This study underscores the influential role of Instagram Reels in shaping discourse surrounding food, health, and nutrition, highlighting the need for critical evaluation of the content influencers disseminated. By recognizing the power dynamics inherent in social media messaging, stakeholders can work towards promoting evidence-based information and fostering a more informed and health-conscious online community. The significance of the research establishes how health and nutrition is communicated to the public through social media and the ways a variety of influencers share content using Reels on Instagram. For additional research, it is recommended that a diverse group of researchers utilize the search feature on Instagram to find influencers. With the limitation of one researcher collecting and coding the data and the platform's algorithm, the diversification of influencers is lacking. Diversifying the app that is used to analyze posts could also yield different results.

**References:**

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