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'With a little help from my friends': exploring mutual engagement and authenticity within foodie influencers' communities of practice

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the dynamics of mutual engagement within the foodie influencer communities of practice created via Instagram. The study is based on 20 in-depth interviews with foodie Instagrammers. Findings demonstrate that unlike other communities of practice, rather than competing among themselves, foodies learn from each other, exchange tips, help those starting out in the field and attend events together. Close collaboration also leads to the formation of strong friendship bonds. However, findings show that whilst authenticity of content is deemed important, elements of influencer engagement are artificially orchestrated within their own community of practice. These findings have implications for marketing professionals in terms of evaluating influencers' engagement authenticity and the selection criteria they consider with regard to targeting appropriate and specific influencers to work with.

Introduction

Influencers such as YouTubers, Instagrammers, and bloggers broadcast to an audience seeking advice and inspiration. Social media influencers (SMIs) are social media users that have a large following from posting personal content that others engage with, curating affiliations with brands, as well as becoming their own brand (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Social media influencers are individuals who have the ability to strongly impact their social media circles (Chandawarkar et al., 2018). As SMIs have the power to shape audience's attitudes toward brands, they are considered as effective independent third party endorsers, complementing traditional brand advertising methods (Freberg et al., 2011). Academic literature discusses, in detail, the power of influencers as an effective tool for brands to connect with their consumers (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Sudha & Sheena, 2017) and highlights issues around authenticity and trust (e.g. Audrezet et al., 2018; García-Rapp, 2017). One of the challenges for SMIs in brand collaboration is its effect on trustworthiness which is underpinned by the perceived noncommercial characteristics of SMI-generated content (Audrezet et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the marketing literature has so far lacked an understanding of how influencers establish and build their community of practice with other influencers (e.g. Gannon & Prothero, 2018; Koch, 2017).

Communities of practice (CoP) is a concept within social learning theory and is defined as 'groups of people linked by a concern, problems or a passion for a topic, and whose knowledge and expertise is deepened by mutual interaction' (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). They have experiences, tools, and problem-solving in common, which develop the CoP over time and sustain interaction. Via this process, specific structures of social relationships among people are formed, and members negotiate competence and meaning of their practices instead of merely acquiring information and skills (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Farnsworth et al., 2016; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999). A community of practice (CoP) represents a dynamic learning process, with both old and new members engaging in that process (Farnsworth et al., 2016). According to Wenger (1998), a CoP reflects a social learning process whereby members establish three aspects: joint enterprise, shared repertoire, and mutual engagement.

Firstly, mutual engagement among CoP members is required. This involves interpersonal interaction, creating relationships, mutual support, and participating in joint activities. One of the notable findings from Dennen (2014) study is the notion of 'backchannel engagement' whereby bloggers communicate via phone, e-mails and other means other than blogging. In this process, implicit rules of engagement are established, and relationships between members are reinforced. It is apparent that both following norms and engaging with others are central to a blogger CoP (Dennen, 2014; Gannon & Prothero, 2018; Limatius, 2018). This happens either explicitly (e.g. following, commenting, liking each other's blog posts and meeting at events), or implicitly – through backchannel engagements. Indeed, several studies of Instagram engagement *pods* have pointed out that following expected 'engagement rules' (i.e. liking and commenting), in a timely manner, is key to being an accepted member of a pod. Similarly, these expected behaviors are important in achieving mutual goals (Cotter, 2018; O'Meara, 2019). Instagram engagement *pods* are the so-called *tactical groups* of Instagram influencers who each help one another to increase the visibility of their posts (Cotter, 2018).

Later, as a CoP develops, a shared repertoire is generated, including language, tools, styles and even ideas. The third core characteristic of a CoP is evidence of a negotiated enterprise. Here, community members have a common understanding of the community ethos and its practices and identify themselves as members of the community (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Identity formation is an integral part of a CoP as members actively negotiate and establish their identities during the participation process (Wenger, 2010). In their study of fashion bloggers, Erz and Christensen (2018) found that the reference group of individuals consequently helps to validate the other members as bloggers in the online community.

Existing research on SMIs is mainly focused on beauty influencers (e.g. Berryman & Kavka, 2017; Gannon & Prothero, 2018; García-Rapp, 2019; Gnegy, 2017) and fashion influencers (e.g. Abidin, 2016a; Jin & Ryu, 2019; McFarlane & Samsioe, 2020). However, little academic attention has been focussed on foodie influencers despite the growth and prevalence of content shared about food. In the UK, food represents the most popular topic, with 39% of people spending time browsing food and drink on Instagram (Parry, 2019). In addition, #food is the 25th most used hashtag on Instagram (Influencer

Marketing Hub, 2020). Some studies of online food cultures examine how the rapid expansion of social media platforms has supported the rise of celebrity chefs (Row & Grady, 2020), while others focus on specific topics such as the anti-food waste movement represented by SMIs such as Sarah Wilson (Perrier & Swan, 2020). The term 'food influencer' can be used to talk about SMIs who influence eating habits (Coates et al., 2019; Goodman & Jaworska, 2020; O'Neill, 2021; Vaqué, 2020), or 'foodies' who post information about specific foods, restaurants, and recipes (Hanifati, 2015; Koch, 2017; Lofgren, 2013; Mohsen, 2017; Naulin, 2019). This study is focused on the latter. The foodie influencers include a mixture of amateur foodies and trend forecasters, who often replace or collaborate with lifestyle journalists (Naulin, 2019).

This paper explores the dynamics of the foodie influencers' CoP in London and Barcelona. The study aims to demonstrate that the foodie community includes the core characteristics of a CoP described by Wenger (1998, 2000). The paper also addresses how the 'mutual engagement' element of the CoP via SMIs Instagram post interactions may compromise the authenticity of their engagement rates. Finally, the paper also discusses the topic from an influencer marketing ethics perspective (Wellman et al., 2020). This study is focused on 'foodie Instagrammers' since Instagram is the most popular social media platform used by foodies (Koch, 2017; Lewis, 2020). In particular, this study focuses on twenty foodie influencers (Mohsen, 2017) who have been identified among Instagram users as having the highest levels of engagement within the hashtags '#londonfoodies' and '#bcnfoodies'. As several studies on Instagram influencers show (e.g. Abidin, 2016a, 2016b; Casaló et al., 2018; Liu & Suh, 2017; Sudha & Sheena, 2017), most Instagram influencers are young women. Previous studies on foodie influencers also found that most of this type of influencer are female (Koch, 2017; Naulin, 2019). Likewise, in this study, the majority of the food influencers were female, therefore, providing a fair representation of the foodie CoP.

Literature review

Influencer marketing

Based on Mediakix data and Insider Intelligence estimates (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021) the influencer marketing industry is set to grow from $8 billion in 2019 to $15 billion by 2022, making this an important area for study. The name 'influencer' derives from the persuasive effect and inspirational positioning that SMIs have within social networks (Weijo et al., 2014). Social media influencers are becoming increasingly desirable for brands to head-up marketing campaigns rather than celebrities, due to the higher levels of engagement influencers generate (James, 2016). The Influencer Marketing Hub (2021) identifies four different types of influencers based on their number of followers on a single social platform, namely: Mega-Influencers (more than 1 million followers); Macro-Influencers (40,000–1 million followers); Micro-influencers (1,000 and 40,000 followers); and Nano-Influencers (less than 1,000 followers).

'SMI-brand collaboration' is one of the key areas of influencer marketing which has become a prominent advertising channel for many brands (DeVeirman et al., 2017; Shan et al., 2019). The forms of collaboration could range from SMIs expressing their (mostly positive) opinions in product reviews to offering tutorials or guides on how to use

a certain product, or posting pictures or videos explicitly containing products, services, or brand logos. Marketing professionals, as observed by Gräve (2019), usually rely on KPIs (key performance indicators) such as an SMI's reach and number of interactions (likes and comments) as success metrics. In addition, the sentiment of the comments posted by the audience, which is often overlooked in quantitative metrics, is often used by marketing professionals to rate the content quality of posts (Gräve, 2019). A great deal of research, originally from the celebrity endorsement literature, has incorporated SMIs as an emerging type of SM celebrity. For example, the study by Jin et al. (2019) compares the effects of traditional celebrities vs. Instagram influencers on consumers' perception of source trustworthiness and brand attitude. These authors claim that information promoted by Instagram influencers is more trustworthy than posts made by traditional celebrities (Jin et al., 2019).

From a marketing perspective, authentic audience engagement plays a key role in influencer marketing. Authenticity is recognised as an attribute that is desirable to both consumers and marketers and is recognised for its impact on message receptiveness and purchase intention (e.g. Audrezet et al., 2018; Napoli et al., 2014). Existing studies which explore definitions of authenticity concur that authenticity in a marketing context revolves around messages and information that are perceived to be true and genuine to both the self and the audience, and also includes behaviors that are intrinsically motivated (e.g. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Wellman et al., 2020). The literature offers a range of frameworks that suggest further extensions of the concept of authenticity in the context of SMIs. Lee and Eastin (2021) concluded that the concept of perceived authenticity (PA) was made up of five constructs (sincerity, truthful endorsements, visibility, expertise, and uniqueness), each of which can have varying effects on a consumer's evaluation of an SMI. Further research on the topic explores the impact of high levels of perceived authenticity on other behaviors and finds that perceived authenticity of SMIs' content increases their engagement rates on Instagram, while increased engagement rates contribute to greater purchase intentions (e.g. Martikainen & Pitkänen, 2020; Valentini et al., 2018). Although both perceived authenticity (PA) and attractiveness are positively correlated with higher engagement from followers, other studies (e.g. Burns, 2021; Pöyry et al., 2019) have found that only PA has an effect on purchase intention.

In order to successfully monetise their Instagram accounts, SMIs must negotiate the tension of PA by approaching their followers in a strategic way to keep their engagement rates high in order to appeal to advertisers. In recent years, some scholars (Audrezet et al., 2018; Erz & Christensen, 2018; Gnegy, 2017; Wellman et al., 2020) have questioned SMIs authenticity when collaborating with brands and have analyzed SMIs strategies to deal with this dilemma. Wellman et al.'s (2020) study into the ethics of authenticity within Influencer Marketing examines SMIs disclosure of financial relationships to their audiences. As Wellman et al. (2020, p. 78) pointed out: 'influencers' ethical framework, albeit nascent, is premised on being true to one's self (authenticity) and being true to one's audience (credibility)'. Another extension of the concept of authenticity is offered by Audrezet et al. (2018) who split the concept into two dimensions: 'passionate authenticity' and 'transparent authenticity'. Passionate authenticity relates to content and endorsements which fit the SMIs' style and ethos and give them creative freedom to produce content driven by intrinsic motivation. 'transparent authenticity' refers to providing fact-based information about the product or service being endorsed by the influencer and the

terms of collaboration. Similarly, Erz and Christensen (2018) found that fashion bloggers often post about the challenges of being a blogger alongside the need to earn a living and, in this way, they aim to justify the commercialisation of their blogging activities. While these studies shed valuable light onto the brand collaboration and transparency management process by SMIs, there are other studies that examine how collaboration among SMIs helps them to gain visibility and increase engagement rates via engagement pods.

Engagement pods (EP) are online communities designed to facilitate systematic engagement where 'users interact with each other's content, thereby increasing its popularity and consequent importance to the content curation algorithm' (Weerasinghe et al., 2020, p. 1874). It is important at this point to make a distinction between EP's and CoP's as they do not represent identical constructs. EP's represent smaller clusters of influencers within a given CoP (a CoP can have numerous engagement pods). Attitudes toward EP's can differ across CoPs. EPs are particularly prominent within the Instagram influencer community due to the way the platform's algorithm determines what posts are being displayed to the audience (Barkho, 2017; McPhillips, 2018; Thompson, 2017). This type of tactical community has attracted growing attention from social media scholars who recognise EPs as a form of organised labor activism against unfair control of productions (O'Meara, 2019), a 'game' that SMIs can play to increase their post visibility by artificially engaging in one another's posts regardless of content (Cotter, 2018), or a quest to maintain their internet celebrity status (Abidin, 2018). Although EP members commit to mutual engagement and share their experience, the mere purpose of countering the platform algorithm makes it less likely to be a representation of an influencer CoP. However, insights from EP practices signal a significant compromise that influencers make in forgoing their engagement authenticity and this leads to the risk of damaging their brands (Cotter, 2018; O'Meara, 2019).

When exploring authenticity in the context of influencer marketing and tactical engagement pods there are some gaps within the literature. The concept of authenticity is largely discussed in the context of a person/influencer and the content they create, not the practices deployed (such as engagement pods or mutual engagement among SMIs) to maximize the visibility of content. Whilst the literature on engagement pods reports a compromise of authenticity as a potential consequence of participation in such tactical communities (e.g. Cotter, 2018; O'Meara, 2019), there is little research which directly addresses this aspect of authenticity or the potential impact of such engagement pods on perceived authenticity. In addition, the marketing literature so far has paid very little attention to how influencers engage in CoP and how mutual engagement is negotiated through collective activities.

SMIs' communities of practice

Research into online communities has shown that social media platforms have enabled CoPs to be formed rapidly within and across international boundaries (Lewis & Rush, 2013; Wang et al., 2019). On social media, CoPs can be generated around a hashtag (e.g. Gilbert, 2016; Lewis & Rush, 2013; Roland et al., 2017; Rosell-Aguilar, 2018), a shared hobby/activity (Manosevitch & Tzuk, 2017), or political debate (e.g. Barbovschi, 2008; Soon &

Kluver, 2014). Likewise, active bloggers also form their own CoPs to share political debates (Soon & Kluver, 2014), academic practices (Dennen, 2014), or entrepreneurial experience of turning crafting hobbies into businesses (Manosevitch & Tzuk, 2017).

For most SMIs, learning and developing their competence and expertise are central to their day-to-day activities (Erz & Christensen, 2018). Some studies have found that SMIs act in a concerted and collective way through actively sharing events or activities and expressing communal values of their membership in a community of practice (Erz & Christensen, 2018; Gannon & Prothero, 2016, 2018). Gannon and Prothero (2018) applied the concept of community of practice (CoP) to analyze interaction among beauty vloggers and found that influencers engage positively in the community. The four elements of mutual engagement present in traditional CoPs are identified in the beauty vlogger domain, namely: 'they engage in regular social interaction, both online and offline; they form relationships relating to their practice; they offer each other mutual support; and they engage in joint activities in relation to content creation in a variety of ways' (Gannon & Prothero, 2018, p. 612). SMIs follow one another on their blogs and social media accounts, observe, learn, and borrow each other's ideas and practices (Gannon & Prothero, 2018). Koch (2017) observed that social capital generated through mutual engagement plays a vital role in building foodie bloggers' expertise.

As mutual interaction is maintained over time, members of a CoP develop a shared repertoire, including language, artifacts, tools, stories, styles, and ideas (Wenger, 2000). In the case of beauty influencers, Gannon and Prothero (2018, p. 601) found that they share some vocabulary (e.g. 'High street vs high end vs drugstore', 'Dupes', 'Face of the Day/ Night', 'Get Ready with Me', 'Swatch Posts'). Erz and Christensen (2018) also found shared vocabulary among fashion bloggers: Vacations become 'travels', events turn into 'meetings', other bloggers become 'colleagues', working on the blog becomes 'days at the office'. Prior studies of communities of influencers have found that SMIs often share knowledge of tools and artifacts used such as camera specifications and photography techniques in curating their posts (Abidin, 2016b; Gannon & Prothero, 2018). Such practices enable CoP members to develop their know-how and expertise. Gannon and Prothero (2018, p. 608) identified that beauty vloggers use specific cameras which are 'chosen with reference to the group'. The visual power of Instagram makes photography a critical element of the post. Thus, SMIs curate the camera angle (close-up, medium or wide), the composition, and post colors (Liu & Suh, 2017).

Finally, CoP members participate in joint enterprise. A joint enterprise is when members acknowledge shared practices and identify themselves with a collective identity of the CoP they belong to (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Here, the production of identity takes place at two levels: firstly – how a person expresses competence in the community and how members recognise it; and, secondly, how the person inherits some of the identifying characteristics of the CoP that they belong to (Farnsworth et al., 2016). Such dimensions reflect the ongoing negotiation of identity. Indeed, prior research of a CoP of fashion bloggers has hinted that the sense of community and the sense of agency co-exist (Limatius, 2018). According to Wenger (2010), there are three interrelated modes of identification: a) *engagement* - a mixture of doing, talking, producing, helping or participating generally; b) *imagination* - a sense of personal reflection and representation of the community, such as envisioning role models, imagining new perspectives or possibilities for oneself in the future; c) *alignment* - a sense of conformity with the CoP norms. As such,

engagement and alignment are expressive constructs of identification where members' activities are easily observed while the imagination mode is abstract and more difficult to detect. Some scholars suggest that imagining is the most powerful mode of identification in Wenger's analogues, as imagined communities can have far-reaching implications on motivation to comply and degree of member engagement (Hooper, 2020; Spanellis & Pyrko, 2021).

Evidence from the literature to date suggests that SMIs tend to develop their status as influencers through stages (Erz & Christensen, 2018). But it remains unclear how SMIs participate and imagine their identities within a CoP in a particular stage of development alongside their quests for identity differentiation. While most CoP studies tend to shed a positive light on CoP participation, Wenger (2010) warns that a CoP is not always a positive process. For example, tensions and division are more apparent when bloggers develop their expertise and become more prominent and therefore more competitive toward one another (Limatius, 2018).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach in order to examine how foodie influencers' CoPs in Barcelona and London fulfil the core characteristics of a CoP described by Wenger (1998, 2000). The analysis focuses on the 'mutual engagement' element of the CoP, particularly via SMIs Instagram posts whereby interaction is often orchestrated via influencer pods which may, in turn, compromise the authenticity of their engagement rates. A guided in-depth interview approach with a sample of ten Influencers in each location of London and Barcelona forms the basis of this study.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select participants in the study based on their active role as foodie Instagrammers. Purposive sampling is based on the selection of certain individuals who have relevant perspectives of a specific phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). The best participants are those who 'have been thoroughly enculturated in the setting, have recent membership participation . . . who can describe a scene [and] provide thick description' (Johnson, 2002, p. 111). In selecting the sample, the top foodie influencers were obtained via the Instagram explore tool which revealed those posts with the highest engagement activity levels (Thomas, 2021). From this, the top thirty Instagram foodie influencers for the #bcnfoodies (Barcelona) and #londonfoodies (London) hashtags on 25th June 2019 were selected as the sample population.

Regarding the use of the foodie-related hashtags, #bcnfoodies (199,592) have over six times more posts than other Spanish cities like Madrid (e.g. #madridfoodies, 32,232). As such, the foodies in Barcelona are more active and engaged on Instagram than foodies based in Madrid and other leading Spanish cities. Moreover, #londonfoodies (449,186) shows over double the posts of the Barcelona foodies (#bcnfoodies) and substantially more than any other UK city. In addition, the multicultural offerings available make London distinctive as a foodie location. In population terms, London (9,425,622) is a much bigger city than Barcelona (5,624,498), so in proportion to the population of the cities #bcnfoodies has more

posts per capita than #londonfoodies. As such, within the European context, the two countries provide a highly engaged and active sample population and thus present as very useful sites for learning. Indeed, both cultural locations are acknowledged as cosmopolitan European cities with a dynamic foodie scene (e.g. Vila et al., 2020).

The current sample of 20 foodie influencer accounts (see Table 1) is based on self-selection, following an invitation to participate. Among the 30 potential participants in each city, the first 10 foodie Instagrammers in each cultural location (10 in Barcelona, 10 in London) who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed. Please note some of the accounts were run by more than one person.

Table 1. List of participants.

Social Media Influencers London

Username	Gender	No. of Followers	Food Type/Style
Foodieatwithu: https://www.instagram.com/foodieatwithu/	Female	2,605	All food & drink types
East London Girl Blog: https://www.instagram.com/eastlondongirlblog/	Female	54,800	Drinks, desserts, cakes, other food & travel
Ellie Croissant: https://www.instagram.com/ellie_croissant/	Female	14,600	Cakes, bread, biscuits, recipes, drinks desserts
Dine with Dina: https://www.instagram.com/dinewithdina/	Female	14,200	African & Middle Eastern plus
Tahlia Coutinho: https://www.instagram.com/tahlia_coutinho/	Female	328,000	Health, fitness, clubs & restaurants
Squibbvicious: https://www.instagram.com/squibbvicious/	Female	8,140	Beer, interiors, lifestyle
London Munch: https://www.instagram.com/londonmunch/	Male and female	5,099	All food & drink types
Jojoandandy (Jojo & Andy – jojoeatslondon): https://www.instagram.com/jojoandandy_/	Female and male	17,900	Asian & all types
ThatGuyEats (James): https://www.instagram.com/thatguyeats/	Male	3,222	Steaks, pizza, burgers & desserts
Angelina Food & Travel: https://www.instagram.com/angelinafoodandtravel/	Female	25,100	All food & drink types
donacroquetabcn: https://www.instagram.com/donacroquetabcn/	Male	12,600	Croquettes
anivegani: https://www.instagram.com/anivegani/	Female	13,700	Vegan, WFPB
thefoodiemark: https://www.instagram.com/thefoodiemark/	Male	12.300	Kitchens & all food types from fine dining to fast food
h2bcn: https://www.instagram.com/h2bcn/?hl=en	Male	4,168	All food & drink types
alotroladodelamesa: https://www.instagram.com/alotroladodelamesa/?hl=en	Female	5,272	Gluten & plastic free
ikigairamen: https://www.instagram.com/ikigairamen/?hl=en	Male	10,400	Ramen/noodles
elguirifoodie: https://www.instagram.com/elguirifoodie/?hl=en	Male and female	6,876	All food & drink types
foodtrendsbcn: https://www.instagram.com/foodtrendsbcn/	Female	8,054	All food & drink types & recipes
quesecueceenbcn: https://www.instagram.com/quesecueceenbcn/	Female	61,600	All food & drink types
montvivant (she has changed this account to sell homemade jewelry now): https://www.instagram.com/montvivant/ Now: https://www.instagram.com/monaquiiara/	Female	2,859	Jewelry design, own creations/ Food, all types

Summary stats recorded 23 October 2020

Data collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as they allow participants to explain the complex meanings they have constructed in their own words (Walliman, 2016). Sixteen interviews were conducted face-to-face, three via Skype and one via telephone. Interviews in Barcelona were conducted in Spanish and translated into English to facilitate the data analysis. The research approach in the interviews was 'informal' – a strategy advocated by Adler and Adler (2002, p. 525) since it 'enhances rapport'. Furthermore, in an attempt to watch the foodie influencers at work in vivo the interviews were conducted in 'foodie' outlets proposed by the participants (i.e. restaurants, bars, cafes) since the use of this type of in-depth interview allows for better 'understanding' of a 'way of life' (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 668).

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted using NVivo software in order to enhance the rigor and provide more flexible data analysis across the different themes (Oliveira et al., 2016). Data were addressed via open coding, by reading and reflecting on the transcripts from each location to facilitate the definition of the codes (Gibbs, 2018). This process followed a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts. The final stage involved revisiting the codes in order to 'allow commonalities to emerge' (Stavros & Westberg, 2009, p. 312). In vivo codes served as the strategic identifiers of participant meanings. Coarse coding was completed, and this was followed by fine coding. This allowed refining of themes, via a series of team meetings, to moderate and add rigor to the process and in order to 'reflect' the perceptions of foodie participants and at the same time maximise analytic utility (Charmaz, 2002, p. 691).

Ethics and limitations

The current study adheres to the ethical guidelines of qualitative research in that voluntary informed consent was gained from each participant before the interviews took place (Barbour, 2008) along with trust and rapport being established accordingly. Informed consent was obtained prior to any interviews taking place. Participants were offered the opportunity to remain anonymous. However, all the foodies chose to disclose their Instagram identity and agreed for the findings to be published for research purposes. In terms of limitations, three aspects may limit this study: namely, the purposive sampling method; UK and Spanish cultural focus; and divergent size of the Influencer's follower base. The authors also acknowledge the issues concerning self-selection bias in social research (e.g. Bjering et al., 2015; Heckman, 1990).

A balancing factor here is that the Instagram food influencers cover a broad spectrum of food preferences in each location and, as such, the sample reflects appreciable diversity along with a dual cultural setting, in order to secure a rich and valuable insight into the research environment. The focus of the study in two European locations means that there are opportunities to provide wider cultural understanding in future research agendas. Finally, participants also vary in their follower numbers from 2,605 to 328,000. On the one hand, this presents a highly divergent purposive sample for analysis. However, this is

counterbalanced by enabling valuable insight to understand both nascent and estab-lished influencer activities in the foodie domain (e.g. amateur foodies and trend fore-casters) which may assist in providing strategic insight and support programmes for nascent and growth-oriented influencers going forward.

Findings

Mutual engagement

This study found evidence of how Instagram foodie influencers demonstrate the four elements within the mutual engagement dimension as described by Wenger (1998, 2000): social interaction online (via Instagram and WhatsApp) and offline (in events and meet-ups); personal relationships (developing friendships and colleague-like relationships); mutual support (helping each other by providing tips); and joint activities (creating content together). Participants in this study have several mutual connections. In fact, 19 out of 20 participants followed 20+ foodie influencers' accounts on Instagram, and it was clear that many foodie influencers followed some popular foodie influencers in their cities (see Table A1 in Appendix A). Participants explained that it was common to comment on each other's posts and to also send private messages. Foodie influencers often first meet online via Instagram and later they meet face-to-face in one-to-one meetings or in events organised by restaurants or brands:

> I'll follow them . . . Maybe comment on their posts. If I'm feeling brave, I'll message them and say: "Hey, I really love what you are doing, I know you are probably really busy - but I would love to meet for a coffee and hear about what you do" (elliecroissant, F, London).

> When I started the page, I messaged maybe two or three people and I said: "I want to start a page. I really like yours. Could we sit down and have a beer and talk about it?". With other ones – it's just people that I've met at events, and I get on really well with them - and even though they might be the other side of the country, we still talk a few times a week (thisguyeats, M, London).

In addition, some participants reported having WhatsApp groups to socialise with other foodie influencers and organise meetups, for example: 'We have a WhatsApp group of the foodies we get along with, we are [a group of] 12' (donacroquetabcn, M, Barcelona). This finding is in line with the study on beauty YouTubers conducted by Gannon and Prothero (2018), where the vloggers also organised regular meet ups. Like in Dennen (2014) study on academic bloggers, foodie influencers also use *'backchannel engagement'*, meaning they communicate on different media (apart from their main platform, in this case Instagram) to keep in contact with other community members.

Over time, sustained connections may lead to the development of personal relation-ships. Some foodie influencers reported having made good friends. For example, several foodie influencers reported going on some nights out with other members of the Instagram foodie influencer community (e.g. londonmunch, M, London), whilst others had even invited community members to their wedding (e.g. eastlondongirl-blog, F, London). On the other hand, there were a few foodie influencers who defined their personal relationships with other foodies as work-related relationships, for instance:

> I wouldn't call any of them my friends. I wouldn't tell my personal life to any of them. But I get on really well with four or five of them (quesecueceenbcn, F, Barcelona).

> Mostly we'll see other food influencers at events. So, for us, it's not so much "friends" - it's more like a "colleague relationship" (jojoeatslondon, F & M, London).

Foodie influencers help each other and offer mutual support. Participants reported liking and commenting on each other Instagram posts to help with engagement and visibility. They also send each other private messages via Instagram in order to ask for advice, especially in the case of newbies. As observed by (Dennen, 2014), newcomers are often being assisted and coached by more experienced bloggers. New members of the foodie CoP ask more experienced foodie influencers for help to grow their accounts when they join the CoP. More experienced foodies also discussed ways in which they would look to help new members of the foodie CoP showing strong collaborative influence within the foodie community:

> We have had quite a lot of people messaging us: "Can you help us grow our account?", "Can you give us a shout out?" . . . and we are like "we've got so much already to do we can't really do that". You know, we don't know you and you've just messaged us, right?! That can get a bit annoying sometimes. (. . .) We try to give some tips, like for growing their account, but that's about it (jojolondon, F & M, London).

Foodie influencers also have dedicated WhatsApp groups to exchange tips: 'Everybody has WhatsApp groups to help each other' (donacroquetabcn, M, Barcelona). In particular, in some of these WhatsApp groups, the influencers announce when someone has posted content and then the others have to engage with the posts within a given time period. This is an orchestrated engagement strategy which may compromise the authenticity of the post (Audrezet et al., 2018; García-Rapp, 2017). The workings of these WhatsApp groups are exemplified here:

> You need to be commenting on other people's pictures and posts. You can't "not comment" and "not like" their pictures and then put your own picture in there. So, you don't necessarily need to post - you just need to be more "active" in the group. You need to be reciprocating their requests, as well as developing your own feed content (londonmunch, M & F, London).

In terms of joint activities, foodies often go together to review restaurants and they also attend events organised by brands to promote products or restaurants or to try a new menu. Foodie influencers often use the '+1 invite' to review a restaurant and ask another influencer to join them. These mutual invitations to review restaurants are good opportunities to grow personal relationships and to co-create content together: 'Sometimes (you invite another foodie) because you want to be on good terms with other foodies and also because it is convenient to create content together' (donacroquetabcn, M, Barcelona). A few participants also commented that when they cannot attend an event they would recommend another foodie, while others (more nascent) explained they were not invited to events.

Interestingly, many foodie influencers work in marketing and communications careers and, as a result of their main jobs, they sometimes get involved in organising events with influencers. In particular, a few of them were focused on marketing services for restaurants and often organised foodie events where they would invite other members of their CoP. These findings therefore have ethical implications in relation to the notion that

influencers are seen as authentic sources of information (e.g. Audrezet et al., 2018; Freberg et al., 2011; Jin et al., 2019). This type of collaboration implies that some aspects of engagement which affect influencer postings are artificial, thus affecting 'transparent authenticity' perceptions as per Audrezet et al. (2018).

Shared repertoire

The second of Wenger (1998, 2000) core dimensions of a CoP is shared repertoires of media, language, practices, tools, styles, etc. Several of these elements were observed among the foodie influencers in this study. In relation to media, despite Instagram being the main platform for foodie influencers, most of them also had a blog or a website, and a Facebook page. However, the Facebook page was created only because they wanted to have a business Instagram account.

In order to build their social presence, foodie influencers select a username strategically since the username represents a user's digital brand name (Tuten, 2018). Tuten (2018) points out that SMIs' usernames are either their real names or nicknames which describe their social media account in shorthand. In this study, most foodies selected nicknames which identified their accounts as being related to food by including the words eat, food or foodie in their nicknames (foodieatwithu, jojoeatslondon, thatguyeats, angelinafood&travel, thefoodiemark, elguirifoodie, foodtrendsbcn). Others show, via their nicknames, the focus of their Instagram accounts on one specific product or food type (e.g. elliecroissant, donacroquetabcn, anivegani, ikigairamen).

As described by Wenger (1998, 2000), the use of shared language is an indicator of the existence of a CoP. The nature of the foodie influencer CoP is described using common vocabulary such as 'invite', '+1', 'opening' (to refer to an event for the opening of a new restaurant) and 'foodie event'. In a similar vein, Gannon and Prothero (2018) identified 'collab', 'guest post', 'TMI' (too much information) and 'gifted' as terms used by the beauty vlogger community. Another practice these foodies have in common is the large amount of time they spend in creating content, from visiting the restaurant, to editing the pictures, writing the copy, and engaging with their followers. Most participants claimed they spend around three hours a day taking care of their Instagram foodie account. As Lewis (2020) observed, food Instagrammers employ a lot of time behind-the-scenes to produce quality food photographs. Foodie influencers generally maintain a similar photo style on their posts, mostly close-up pictures of food with top-down camera angle and curated esthetics, with the influencer seldom appearing in the picture.

The use of close-up images from a top-down camera angle and beautiful esthetics by participants is in line with the study conducted by Yang (2019) who analyzed the visual representation of food from the top 10 foodie influencers' Instagram accounts in the US. According to Lewis (2020, p. 28), the representation of food on Instagram by foodie influencers has a unique style which is 'set in the context of an esthetic community of peers', or what Tandoh (2016) refers as a 'pristine food styling'. In addition, most participants preferred a single picture on the post rather than carousel: 'Almost 95% of my posts are single photos' (quesecueceenbcn, F, Barcelona). A few foodie influencers highlighted they liked posting pictures showing the restaurant, for instance: 'I take pictures of the place and then the food' (angelinafood&travel, F, London). Most foodie influencers showed their preference to publish posts over stories since posts stay in the news feed

and stories only last for 24 hours. In line with findings from Leaver et al. (2020), most participants in this study regularly took pictures with their mobile phones. However, there were a few foodies who used professional cameras. In addition, all participants agreed that they rarely used the Instagram filters, which are photographic technologies that were introduced by Instagram to easily enhance photos by modifying colors or changing light (Gretzel, 2018). Instead, they used different editing apps which include their own filters, such as Vsco and Snapseed, Afterlight, or Lightroom to change the contrast, saturation, and lighting as well as Photoshop 'to edit brightness and intensify the colors' (food-trendsbcn, F, Barcelona).

Apps to manage hashtags (e.g. Tap, Mosaic) were also used by some participants to help them to select the best hashtags for their posts. In this study, foodie influencers used between 10–30 hashtags per post. Interestingly, most foodie influencers from Barcelona used mainly hashtags in English, due to the ease of finding popular hashtags in English rather than in Spanish or Catalan. A few foodie influencers explained they use the comments section to include some of the hashtags as they do not like posts with too many hashtags 'because it certainly looks better in terms of the visuals on the page' (foodieatwithu, F, London). Foodie influencers usually include a few common hashtags in their posts: e.g. #londonfoodies, #london as well as specific hashtags related to the food or location:

> There are set ones that I always use. So, for instance, #london, #restaurantslondon. If it's a casino, I'd write #londoncasinos. If it's an Asian restaurant, #asianrestaurants. I don't research enough into hashtags as I should. Sometimes, I'll just type into Google "top London foodie hashtags", and I just copy and paste those (tahliacoutinho, F, London).

Finally, another tool that a few participants use is Instagram ads. They use this promotional tool to boost their engagement of some posts to either drive traffic to their blogs or promote a competition. Although most of the participants who had used Instagram ads claimed they were a good way to increase visibility, they also highlighted that it was quite expensive and, as such, prohibitive for many influencers and nascent Instagrammers.

Joint enterprise

The third dimension of a CoP, according to Wenger (1998, 2000), is joint enterprise, which includes negotiated enterprise, indigenous enterprise, and mutual accountability. The element of joint enterprise is related to the CoP members having a shared understanding of the community and its practices. Practices within a community are collectively negotiated (Wenger, 1998). Learning by watching other influencers was a common practice among foodie influencers. For example, apart from looking for trendy foodie hashtags in their cities in Google, as discussed earlier, foodie influencers often look for inspiration for new hashtags from other foodie posts:

> I check what other food influencers from Barcelona have posted and I get a hashtag list (quesecueceenbcn, F, Barcelona).

> I try to get some inspiration from other bloggers if they have eaten at that restaurant (angelinafood&travel, F, London).

Participants also monitored what other foodie influencers were doing in order to benchmark their own performance:

> We see and compare ourselves with all the large and medium influencers including those that have over 40,000 and above. We also compare with those that have 10,000 to 20,000, even the ones that have a small following (elguirifoodie, M & F, Barcelona).

Corresponding to the study on fashion bloggers, conducted by Limatius (2018), the negotiation of mutual support and competition was identified in this study. Community members navigate their way through the tension between normed and differentiated content while having commitment in the CoP's mutual accountability (Gannon & Prothero, 2018; Wenger, 1998). Despite a few participants claiming they were not competitive with other foodie influencers: 'I'm not bothered about my engagement rate in a battling way' and advocating the shared goal of the community of practice: 'We are all in this together' (squibbvicious, F, London). Others commented on a certain level of competitiveness within the community:

> I don't want to "underplay the sense of competition either. It's not an "aggressive" sense of competition, but it is "there" in the background. It is there in the back of your head that there is a slight competitive element. When someone is doing well, and gaining followers - you are thinking: "Why? How? What are they doing that I'm not doing?" (londonmunch, M, London).

> We have a good relationship, but we also compete among ourselves. This world can be a little problematic sometimes. Some of them are really nice people but some of them could even steal a client from you (quesecueceenbcn, F, Barcelona).

On the other hand, a CoP is an indigenous enterprise insofar as the practices within that community are intrinsic to the nature of the community itself – but they are also shaped and constrained by the specific situation of each member (Wenger, 1998). In the foodie influencers CoP, including some specific foodie hashtags in posts (e.g. #foodie, #food), planning which restaurants to visit one or two weeks in advance, reviewing new menus, attending foodie events, and not posting the content whilst in the restaurant were some practices indigenous to the community. All participants agreed they would not post content on Instagram when they were in the restaurant (only some stories on rare occasions). They explained there were three main reasons not to do so: (1) time needed to edit the photos, (2) time to write the copy, and (3) for security/safety reasons (in the case of female foodies).

Finally, mutual accountability relates to the shared collective identity and understanding of common practices (Wenger, 1998). In this study, some participants referred to their sense of belonging to the foodie community in their cities:

> I consider myself as part of the (foodie) community. I have a good relationship witheveryone (donacroquetabcn, M, Barcelona).

> The London foodies' community (...) I get to meet a lot more other London foodies, and within that network we see each other as friends (...). I do feel part of it (foodieatwithu, F, London).

A common characteristic in online communities, as Miño-Puigcercós et al. (2019) pointed out, is the members' shared sense of belonging. Following Youkhana (2014), Miño-Puigcercós et al. (2019, p. 124) claim that the idea of belonging has been defined as 'a personal feeling to

be part of certain group, place or location'. It is noteworthy to state that participants acknowledged the value of belonging to and interacting with other members within their CoP and they expressed having mutual accountability embedded in their practices:

> We will engage, we will comment on people's posts, we will view people's stories and message them or react to those stories so that we're still visible within the food community. I think everyone is very friendly with each other. You know, we all obviously have a common interest (JojoEatsLondon, F & M, London).

> Now we have started meeting up and it's really nice because you form this community. And then you end up tagging them on things in your story . . . and they tag you - and then more people notice you . . . and, once you form the community, I think it's easier to grow (dinewithdina, F, London).

Various norms were discussed within the foodie CoP such as networking at events, helping one another, calling out bad practice (e.g. plagiarising posts), and also amongst some, a dislike of the term 'influencer' and preference of the term 'foodie'. A possible reason behind this was because many of the foodies interviewed in this study were not full-time influencers who made a living by monetising their accounts. They were rather 'foodies' whose engagement in the community was inspired by a love of food, but very much considered a hobby and often balanced with a full-time job, relating to Audrezet et al.'s (2018) notion of passionate authenticity.

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity was discussed with all the participants. This study found that influencers acknowledged the importance of authenticity in terms of the academic definitions of being genuine and true to oneself (e.g. Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Wellman et al., 2020) and adopted a variety of practices to convey both 'passionate authenticity' and 'transparent authenticity'' as per Audrezet et al. (2018). As the quotes below show, conveying both was very important to the foodies interviewed in this study. That the activity and content of posts from other influencers within the community was discussed would suggest that the commitment to passionate authenticity was not upheld by all within the community:

> We try to discover different places. To do that we walk a lot. We don't own a car - so we walk a lot to discover new places. We try not to go to all the same places as the other foodies because there are some foodies who post about the same places (El Guiri Foodie, M and F, Barcelona).

> So just going to different places and being truly passionate about the food and not just eating it because it's gonna get a lot of likes or because it makes a pretty picture (londonmunch, M & F, London).

There was evidence from several influencers which further supported findings from the authenticity literature, in particular the desire to be true and real to oneself (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Wellman, 2000) and ensure this was portrayed in their content. Foodies discussed how they would turn down brands who they did not see as a good personal fit, and how they felt some full-time influencers within the community, who excessively monetized their account to make a living, did so at a cost of compromising passionate authenticity:

> If you want the money more than you care about your following … But I genuinely like my followers, and I talk with them a lot. And they interact a lot. So, I don't want to sell them a lie (dinewithdina, F, London).

> I just will take what I'm given. And if it's somewhere that I don't think I would want to eat, I will say no. So, the same with hotels - if it is somewhere I don't want to travel to I will say no. I like to keep my content true to me as a person (Squibbvicious, F, London).

The interviews also provided further insight into the importance of transparent authenticity for the foodie community. There was very strong agreement amongst the participants that asking for things in return for a post such as a fee or a gift could negatively impact their own authenticity. These activities were also viewed by some influencers as inauthentic (as per Ryan & Deci, 2000), for example:

> If they are given a free meal, people are more inclined to speak highly or praise that meal - because you're getting that meal paid for. You don't want to knock them back by saying 'your food wasn't actually good'. So you're more inclined, in your human nature, to be nice in return (londonmunch, M, London).

Interestingly, as already demonstrated, the foodies were not hesitant about discussing engagement with each other's posts in order to increase visibility, despite previous literature on engagement pods highlighting a potential impact on authenticity and perceived authenticity (e.g. Cotter, 2018; O'Meara, 2019).

Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this study strongly mirror the theoretical frameworks offered in the CoP literature relating to the dynamics of a CoP (Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger, 1998) and how influencers form their identity within a CoP (Gannon & Prothero, 2018) whilst offering fresh insights into foodie influencers and CoP dynamics. Foodies are an important community of influencers that have been the focus of minimal research within the academic literature to date. Given the prevalence and significance of foodie influencers in popular culture, the processes in which 'foodies' engage when building professional networks with other influencers and their perceptions of their own CoP takes on greater meaning and importance.

When establishing their networks many foodies connect initially via Instagram, commenting on each other's posts, and even communicating via private messages with the intention of introducing and promoting themselves. The findings of this study demonstrated several instances where such messages represented the starting point for building strong friendships and very close working professional relationships that had developed and then endured over a long period-of-time. In exceptional cases, deep personal friendships were established that went well beyond that of a working relationship. Newcomers often approached more experienced foodie influencers to ask them for advice to improve their accounts and grow their following. Many participants reported to have initially met face-to-face at events organised by restaurants, brands, or agencies (despite following each other on Instagram prior to meeting), while others arranged meetups via Instagram or WhatsApp private messages. As a result of the development of such relationships and networks, many foodie influencers often invite each other to restaurants when they get a + 1 and co-create content, meaning businesses often benefit from the visibility offered by a second influencer.

Rather than having to negotiate mutual support and competition as described in previous studies conducted on fashion influencers (Limatius, 2018), the findings of this study portrayed the foodie influencer CoP as largely collaborative. Foodie influencers were very keen to learn from each other, exchange tips, help those starting out in the field and collaborate online by liking and commenting on each other's Instagram posts. Whilst there was a sense of competition amongst some, this was not considered as aggressive or debilitating. Building on this attitude of mutual engagement, as opposed to competing with each other, the SMIs who participated in this study expressed their feeling of belonging to the 'foodie community' in their respective cities and considered others in the community as peers or friends. This has implications to marketers and brand managers in that strategies and tactics should arguably be developed that assist in managing CoP network groups, rather than focussing engagement on an individual foodie influencer. In the event of targeting individual influencers, marketing managers should also give due consideration to the extent that an influencer networks and engages with others within the CoP.

The findings of this study provide some support to the existing literature on engagement pods (e.g. Cotter, 2018; McPhillips, 2018; O'Meara, 2019; Weerasinghe et al., 2020). As per the EP literature, some foodie influencers self-organise through WhatsApp groups inform others about their latest post and then coordinate when to comment and like each other's content to try to increase the visibility of their content and game the Instagram algorithm (Cotter, 2018). Most of the WhatsApp groups referred to by the foodies participating in this study were merely friendship groups that had gradually evolved through networking rather than presenting as formal tactical units with mutual engagement being a criterion for membership (although these were acknowledged to exist within the foodie CoP). These findings take the discussion on authenticity and its extended concepts in a new direction in the context of SMIs by adding further considerations for the concept of transparent authenticity. The foodies in this study openly admitted to commenting on the posts of friends and colleagues to help them artificially orchestrate engagement. They did so without acknowledging any potential impact on perceived authenticity, or any ethical conflicts of interest in relation to transparent authenticity. Instagram does not differentiate between a click or comment from a stranger that is posted as a result of being intrinsically motivated to do so as a result of the quality of the content they see, and a friend of the influencer doing so for extrinsic reasons (in the hope that the favor will be returned). However, the reasoning behind the click in such a scenario does present a difference in the authenticity of the engagement. Hence the authors of this study would add a third dimension to the work of Audrezet et al. (2018) entitled 'engagement authenticity', which refers to the nature of the engagement associated with an influencer's post and whether this is in the form of genuine likes and comments from people who were motivated to do so because they liked what they saw, or whether the engagement was orchestrated by the influencers themselves in order to try and manipulate Instagram's algorithms.

Interestingly, during the interviews, it became apparent that the foodies' motivation to participate in the study was mainly about increasing their exposure and publicity. As such, self-serving motivations were identified here in the sample population. On one hand, this adds an extra layer of understanding within the topic of authenticity and may prove a motivating factor for other researchers in the field in the context of inviting a sample

population to participate. On the other hand, the apparent conflict of interest regarding the subject of 'authenticity' raises ethical concerns in relation to the sample. For example, CoP members claim authenticity is very important – yet the current study finds that foodie influencers help each other with likes and comments resulting in inauthentic engagement. To counterbalance this, the foodie influencers argue that trying to trick the algorithm can be perceived as a positive intervention since they are rebelling against the digital autocracy and challenging the unfair power of the leading platforms – and, as such, leveling the playing field. This has implications for practitioners and researchers alike, for example regarding the interpretation of Instagram engagement statistics and for future research in terms of understanding and establishing both appropriate access and protocols.

This study opens up a range of pathways for possible future research. Given that the 'foodie' culture is a global phenomenon, it would be interesting if future studies analyze CoP across more diverse countries and cultures. Future research opportunities could look to broaden the understanding of communities of practice further by focussing on other categories of influencers (e.g. lifestyle, travel, etc) and could also explore whether multi-disciplinary influencers belong to different CoPs. In addition, future research could further investigate the self-branding techniques adopted by food influencers and the way foodie influencers build social capital and how this helps to improve their wellbeing. Future research could also further investigate the concept of 'engagement authenticity' and its potential impact on perceived authenticity.

This study shows how foodie Instagrammers conform to a concept of community which fulfils the characteristics of the community of practice (CoP) described by Wenger (1998). It also focuses the analysis on the authenticity of foodies' 'mutual engagement' via actively making comments on the posts of other foodies. This paper also introduces the term 'engagement authenticity' to discuss the nature of engagement associated with an influencer's post distinguishing between genuine likes and comments from followers and the engagement orchestrated by communities of influencers to manipulate Instagram's algorithms and to promote each other's Instagram posts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix A

Table A1. Foodie CoP network on Instagram.

Username	Following (20 foodie accounts with more than 1,000 followers)
Foodieatwithu	*feastlondon*, foodtravelinspired, healthyvegeating, foodcouplelondon, jess_good_foods, london_delicious, jerica.feasts, greattastelondon, theveryhangrycharlotte, jannyfoodlover, thelondonfoodgal, food._.connoisseur_, greattastelondon, plateapplondon, foodcouplelondon, galwholikesfood, lazybrioche, eatlikeatank, tastebudslondon, foodbomb.comm.
Eastlondongirlblog	**ellie_croissant, squibbvicious, thatguyeats, londonmunch, dinewithdina, jojoeatslondon, jojoandy_,** *hettylovesfood, fitwaffle, zoeslittlelondon, jennifer.earle, taste_felicity, gemtakesfoodpics, wear. juti.eats, feastlondon,* theveryhungrycharlotte, foodtravelinspired, the_lnd_foodie, thefoodeffectdr,,thetasteaddict.
Ellie Croissant	**angelinafoodandtravel, eastlondongirlblog,** *jennifer.earle, taste_felicity, gemtakesfoodpics, feastlondon,* foodfacenyc, threegirlslcook, platesoftate, wandrlstng, goodfoodforwho, food_obssesd_girl, dappereatslondon, truffleandtoast, food_niki_downs, foodgeek.dk, jimchall, ravneeteats, robin.gill.cook, thetasteaddict.
Dine with Dina	*mybigfathalalblog,* lets_eat_better_together, fowlmouthsfood, pastrywithjenn, thefoodmedic, adeleursitti, tastecadets, marbieskitchen, ellypear, ashleywent, eatdrinklve, sudifoodie, thebohobeet, nicolaalamb, mrdan_thompson, whippedsomethingup, kithanaa, mwatsonnyc, gizzierskine, eatgordaeat.
Tahlia Coutinho	thefitlondoner, adameats.
Squibbvicious	**eastlondongirlblog,** *eboniivoryblog,* vegan.hotspot, foodntraveldiaries, food_obsessed_girl, ourcountertop, foodurchin, carkhana, foodfuntravel.rocks, kaveyt, wellfedtraveller, londonerlovinglife, instagrub_, munchiesandmunchkins, fodiefrotravels, wholetthemumout, foodbanker, vegetarianfoodpower, hungerlusttravel, foodiegirl.ldn.
London Munch	**jojoandy_, eastlondongirlblog, angelinafoodandtravel,** *eastlondongirlblog,* jennifer.earle, londonfoodqueen, taste_felicity, brunchingblondies, gemtakesfoodpics, wear.juti.eats, feastlondon, fiwaffle, theveryhungrycharlotte, foodtravelinspired, eating_in_london, tastecadets, afoodiegirl, food_obsesd_girl, thetasteaddict, *haloodiefoodie.*
jojoandandy_(Jojo & Andy – jojoeatslondon)	**londonmunch, eastlondongirlblog,** *hettylovesood, londonfoodqueen, taste_felicity, gemtakesfoodpics, feastlondon, fitwaffle,* foodtravel inspired, lilhungryfoodie, foodtryb, eatwithhanna_, tastedbytania, funeatsldn, the.foodgeographer, delicious.earth, londontumtum, vivianfoodie, huongatlondon, fashionmeetsfood.
ThatGuyEats (James)	**eastlondongirlblog,** *londonfoodqueen, taste_felicity, branchingblondies, gemtakesfoodpics, fitwaffle,* thedelectableveggie, thehungryhoe_, foodfromthecorners, couple_of_foodies, mcityfoodie, datenightsldn, beccaeatsworld, lilo,and.dish, sophsterldn, lovepopupslondon, real_forking_diet, hungry_0ink, mrspattymaster, lev_ets_london.
Angelina Food & Travel	**londonmunch, ellie_croissant,** christieinlondon, myfoodiefeasts, hangry_sonia, greekygirl_, chanty_delizienonnapapera, minna_vauhkonen, troppobuono_on_air, foodrink_costieramalfitana, balkankitchen, foodislifeandlove_, gusto. agosti, georgiaeats_, hollie_eats, mymandarinstudygram, joy_of_c00king, itsbay.fr, themindfulnesskitchen, eyezrateats.

Table A1. (Continued).

Username	Following (20 foodie accounts with more than 1,000 followers)
donacroquetabcn	**h2bcn, foodtrendsbcn**, *mentjatbarcelona*, *barcelonamordiscos*, foodietourbcn, appetite_and_other_stories, nataliabhqz, fecstime, foodiedani, entaulats, uri_bonet, comeresblog, losfoodistas, barcelonaeats, foodieinbarcelona, yummybarcelona, mireiacasamada, gastronomistas, foodinbcn, carrerdelagua, eatinbcn, gastrobarna, barcelonafoodexperience, foodyingbcn, cenitasporbarcelona, bravasbarcelona, lauraponts, deliciousmartha, montse_femcuinetes, lagulateca,
anivegani	thebigmansworld, kitchenaidespana, come.vive.viaja, yogaofcooking, isoldavila, veggiekins, fivesechealth, minimalistbaker, rebelrecipes, biancazapatka, therawberry, choosingchia, thenourishedpianist, beatrizmoliz, yotambienmecuido, cocinacreativa86, foodgreenmood, healthykaty_es, danistrailcooking, marevagillioz_.
thefoodiemark	**h2bcn, elguirifoodie, foodtrendsbcn**, the_ldn_foodie, localfoodbcn, foodiedani, foodie_essentials, foodiepediabcn, nicoleeatsnyc, foodie_fork_thought, food_di_i_leni_a, food.night.life, foodhuntingmyway, foodaddictbcn, tandemculinario, meatmehappy, food_monster10, nomnomclicks, foodie.by.heart_, im_food_o_holic, foodcreatinlove, foodieprani, food_chunkiee, food_o_mad, foodbug_jaipur, foodie_chokro
h2bcn	**monaquiiara, elguirifoodie, donacroquetabcn, foodtrendsbcn, thefoodiemark**, foodieinbarcelona, foodinbcn, *barcelonamordiscos*, foodiedani, losfoodistas, barcelonaeats, letziabcn, *menjatbarcelona*, lacocinadethais, natalibhqz, carrerdelagua, appetite_and_other_stories, fecstime, *elisa.bcnpostres*, barcelonafoodexperience.
alotroladodelamesa	1000fitmeals, carrerdelagua, natalibhqz, *menjatbarcelona*, *elisa. bcnpostres*, losfoodistas, letsbitebcn, martafoodinbcn, martasimonet, mireiacasamada, gastronomistas, *barcelonamordiscos*, eatinbcn, foodyingbcn, lauraponts?, deliciousmarta, villa_foodie, food_glooby, foodiesrunnercommunity, food_lovers_bcn.
ikigairamen	**Foodtrendsbcn**, enjoy_japan_in_barcelona, foodietourbcn, fecstime, entaulats, comeresblog, losfoodistas, barcelonaeats, letsbitebcn, yummybarcelona, foodinbcn, *barcelonamordiscos*, eatinbcn, gastro_barna, barcelonafoodexperience, foodyingbcn, bravasbarcelona, martastaste, imfoodiein, nicetomeetyoufoodie.
elguirifoodie	**h2bcn, monaquiiara, thefoodiemark, foodtrendsbcn, alotroladodelamesa**, comersebarcelona, foodanonym.bcn, *unicornio_gloton*, localfoodbcn, fecstime, donacroquetabcn, donafoodie, comeresblog, losfoodistas, elbravero, *letiziabcn*, foodinbcn, eatinbcn, barcelonafoodexperience, quesecueceenbcn, bravasbarcelona.
foodtrendsbcn	**h2bcn, donacroquetabcn, elguirifoodie, thefoodiemark, ikigairamen**, forkingpassport, *unicorniogloton*, carrerdelagua, localfoodbcn, appetite_and_other_stories, theindiefoodiebcn, fecstime, donafoodiebcn, foodiedani, entaulats, comeresblog, losfoodistas, letziabcn, mentatbarcelona, foodieinbarcelona.
quesecueceenbcn	elaparejadordeplatos, carrerdelagua, foodietourbcn, appetite_and_other_stories, theindiefoodie, comeresblog, losfoodistas, barcelonaeats, letsbitebcn, *menjatbarcelona*, foodiinbarcelona, yummybarcelona, martasimonet, mireiacasamada, gastronomistas, foodinbcn, *barcelonamordiscos*, *dracookinghealthy*, eatinbcn, gastrobarna.
montvivant (she has changed this account to sell homemade jewelry now)	**h2bcn, donafoodie, elguirifoodie**, porelsabordedios, carrerdelagula, foodiedani, bryan_cooks_food, fecstime, entaulats, barcelonaeats, foodieinbcn, *barcelonamordiscos*, eatinbcn, zampamundo2, barcelonafoodexperience, cenitasporbarcelona, gastronosfera, foodybarcelona, my_little_culinary_corner, foodhunter_cs.

Summary stats recorded 23rd October 2020
The followed accounts who are also participants of this study are in bold.
The followed accounts who were contacted to participate in the study (top 30 engagement rate for #bcnfoodies or #londonfoodies) are in italics.