

The business of 'eating with your eyes': Food influencers and marketing

1. Food on your feed

Discuss these questions with a partner:

- Do you follow any food bloggers or influencers on social media? Who?
- Have you ever visited a restaurant or tried a recipe because you saw it online?
- Why do you think photos of food are so popular on platforms like Instagram?
- What makes a food photo "eye-catching"?

Answers will vary. This is a warm-up to encourage students to share their personal experiences and opinions about social media and food culture.

2. The language of influence

Match the vocabulary with the correct definitions.

1. Influencer	f. A person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product or service.
2. Sponsorship deal	c. An agreement where a company pays a person to promote its product.
3. To translate into	b. To result in something; to convert into.
4. Eye-catching	g. Visually attractive or noticeable.
5. To get the word out	e. To share information about something with many people.
6. Downside	a. A disadvantage or negative aspect of something.
7. Modest	d. Fairly small, especially when you were expecting more.

3. Video: The recipe for success

Watch the video about food influencer Stephanie Perez and answer the questions.

- How does Stephanie make money from her Instagram page? (List two ways)
Answer: She gets paid for hosting events at restaurants and from sponsorship deals.
- What percentage of her total monthly income comes from her social media work?
Answer: About 20% of her monthly income.
- According to the video, what are two main advantages of social media marketing for businesses compared to traditional advertising?
Answer: It has a much lower cost and it allows businesses to connect with their customers directly.

4. How does Oddfellows Ice Cream Company use social media?

Answer: *They use it to "get the word out" about their new products, like the Asia-themed passport program flavors.*

5. What are the three downsides of social media marketing mentioned by Dr. Moore?

Answer: *It is time-consuming, it needs to be updated frequently, and negative reviews can be very costly.*

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

4. Vocabulary in context

Complete the sentences with a word or phrase from the box.

popularity

connect

costly

immediate

puns

updated frequently

1. The influencer's captions are full of clever food **puns** like "I love you from my head tomatoes."
2. The blogger built on the **popularity** of her Instagram page to launch a cookbook.
3. Social media allows businesses to **connect** directly with their customers and get feedback.
4. When you post a photo, the reach is **immediate**; thousands of people can see it right away.
5. To keep followers engaged, a social media account needs to be **updated frequently**.
6. Ignoring bad reviews can be very **costly** for a restaurant's reputation.

5. Grammar focus: Gerunds and infinitives

We often use **gerunds** (verb + -ing) and **infinitives** (to + verb) in different situations. Understanding when to use each is key.

- Use a **gerund** as the subject of a sentence ("**Tempting** people with photos isn't new."), after a preposition ("She gets paid for **hosting** events."), and after certain verbs (e.g., enjoy, avoid, finish).
- Use an **infinitive** to show purpose ("Use social media **to get** the word out."), after many adjectives ("It's expensive **to advertise**."), and after certain verbs (e.g., allow, want, decide).

Choose the correct form of the verb (gerund or infinitive) to complete each sentence.

1. Influencers enjoy (**sharing**) their favourite restaurant discoveries.
2. It can be difficult (**to build**) a large following on Instagram.
3. Restaurants use social media (**to attract**) new customers.
4. (**Taking**) good photos is essential for a food blogger.
5. She decided (**to launch**) her blog after her friends praised her cooking.
6. He is responsible for (**updating**) the company's social media accounts.

6. Useful phrases for social media strategy

Study these phrases for discussing the pros and cons of social media marketing.

Describing impact and reach:

- "A single post can **translate into** more customers."
- "The **reach that you get** is immediate."
- "It helps you **get your product out there**."

- "She has **built on the popularity** of her page."

Highlighting benefits:

- "It gives you an opportunity to **connect with your customers**."
- "It's a free and immediate form of marketing."
- "It's less expensive than traditional advertising."

Mentioning drawbacks:

- "There is a **downside**."
- "It's very **time-consuming**."
- "The account needs to be **updated frequently**."
- "Negative reviews can be very **costly**."

7. Role-play: Pitching an influencer campaign

Work in pairs. One of you is a restaurant owner, and the other is a marketing consultant. The consultant must persuade the owner to hire a food influencer.

Roles:

- **Restaurant Owner:** You are worried about the cost and risks. You prefer traditional advertising. Ask questions about the price, the results, and what happens if you get negative comments.
- **Marketing Consultant:** You believe an influencer campaign is the best way to attract new, younger customers. Use the phrases from this lesson to explain the benefits (reach, connecting with customers) and address the owner's concerns about the downsides.

Discussion points:

- The cost of hiring an influencer vs. the potential return.
- How to choose the right influencer for the restaurant's brand.
- How an influencer can "get the word out" faster than a newspaper ad.

- How to handle potential negative feedback.

Student performance will vary. Encourage students to actively use the vocabulary and phrases from sections 2 and 6. Circulate and provide feedback on their use of the target language.

8. Writing: Create a sponsored post

Imagine you are a food influencer who has a sponsorship deal with a local café. Write a short Instagram post (a caption for a photo) to promote their new signature dessert.

Your post should:

- Describe the dessert in an **eye-catching** way.
- Include a clever food **pun**.
- Encourage your followers to visit the café.
- Use the hashtag #ad or #sponsored to show it's a paid post.

[Sample answer:]

Had the most incredible dessert experience at @TheCornerCafe today! 🍰 This is their new "Velvet Volcano" lava cake, and trust me, it's absolutely **lava-ly!** The moment your spoon breaks the rich, dark chocolate cake, a river of warm, gooey fudge erupts. It's so decadent and delicious. You seriously have to run, not walk, to try this masterpiece for yourself. You won't be sorry! #ad #sponsored