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**Article:**

Choudhary, S., Nayak, R., Kumari, S. et al. (1 more author) (2019) Analysing acculturation to sustainable food consumption behaviour in the social media through the lens of information diffusion. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 145. pp. 481-492. ISSN 0040-1625

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2018.10.009>

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1 **Analysing acculturation to sustainable food consumption behaviour in the social**  
2 **media through the lens of information diffusion**

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12

13 **Abstract**

14 Drawing on theories of acculturation and information diffusion, this paper examines  
15 whether social media usage, intergroup contacts and information dissemination  
16 influence the cultural adaptation of three ethnic groups, and its implications on  
17 sustainable consumption behaviour. Twenty-four semi-structured interviews  
18 containing multiple dimensions of social media uses, acculturation, food consumption  
19 behaviour, and information diffusion were administered to a sample of Indians (living  
20 in the home country), British Indians (living in the host country for more than 10 years)  
21 and White British (natives of Britain) users of social media. Our findings suggest that  
22 there is a clear link between the integrated strategy of acculturation and information  
23 diffusion on social media, which influences acculturation to sustainable food  
24 consumption behaviour among social media users. Managerial implications of this  
25 research finding are that intervention in information diffusion aids acculturation  
26 through the social media, which serves to infuse social media and sustainability  
27 strategist with knowledge to best influence the consumers in developing sustainable  
28 food consumption behaviour. This research also identifies opportunities to expand this  
29 academic research and contribute further to the theories of remote acculturation on  
30 which limited research has been done.

31

32 **Key words:** acculturation, social media, information diffusion, sustainable behaviour,  
33 food consumption

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## 34 **1. Introduction**

35 The theory of acculturation, envisaged initially in the fields of sociology and  
36 anthropology in early 20th century (Park and Burgess, 1921; Redfield, Linton and  
37 Herskovits, 1936), often explains intricacies of the process involved in people to people  
38 (or migrants) interactions from diverse cultural backgrounds when subjected to  
39 continuous contact with each other. Based on their perspective towards their own and  
40 new cultural contexts (Berry 1980, 1997), some of the migrants opt to adopt from the  
41 acculturation strategies of assimilation, integration, segregation or marginalization.  
42 Some, for instance, go for “integration” by maintaining ties to their own cultures while  
43 adopting some practices and beliefs of the new culture. However, the acculturation  
44 processes appear to be complex and have often been addressed unclear and inconsistent  
45 ways within the literature (Berry and Sam, 1997).

46 Whilst most of the acculturation theories primarily focus on physical movement  
47 of migrants, there is a vacuum of studies that address the emergence of virtual  
48 acculturation aided by cross cultural integration over social media and facilitated by  
49 increasing information dissemination. Immigration of people from one country to  
50 another, either permanently or temporarily, gradually exposes them to different  
51 cultures, food, clothes and customs. While socialisation facilitates learning of nuances  
52 of the culture one grows in, acculturation entails the interaction of at least two cultures,  
53 aiding the process of adaptation and assimilation of the person to the values and  
54 standards of a new culture (Mendoza, 1989; Rudmin, 2003). Physical migration  
55 exposes migrants to an obscure process of adaptation to unknown physical, biological  
56 (food, health), economic, social, and cultural conditions often creating consequential  
57 psychological stress among such migrants (Simons 1901; Tajfel and Turner 1986;  
58 Berry and Sam 1997; Dikmen 2002; Marsh and Sahin-Rudmin 2009; Luedicke 2011).  
59 However, with the emergence of Internet and increasing use of social media, migration  
60 is no longer a precondition for people to coalesce with people from other lifestyles,  
61 food habits, professions, political views, religiosities, ethnicities and ideologies. Social  
62 media and Internet platforms can increase exposure of non-migrants to diverse cultures  
63 in which they have never lived thus aiding in remote acculturation (Ferguson and  
64 Bornstein, 2012). In their study, Ferguson and Bornstein (2012) explain remote  
65 acculturation as a new form of acculturation that can occur by discontinuous and/or  
66 indirect interaction between two historically and geographically separated cultures  
67 through emerging mechanisms of globalisation such as social media.

68           Although, the degree of convenience and reachability provided by social media  
69 platforms in assimilation, integration or acculturation may not always be homogenous,  
70 the fact is that it facilitates engagement between groups that share similar values and  
71 beliefs regardless of geographical distance (Phillips, 2008). Bjork and Magnusson  
72 (2009) state that an individual with high number of social contacts is more likely to  
73 generate new ideas by embracing, processing and embarking upon new information. In  
74 this way the social media facilitates information diffusion, which is a process how  
75 certain information or knowledge is disseminated and reaches individuals through  
76 interactions on social media (Zafarani et al. 2014). However, there is limited research  
77 that explores such relationship.

78           Where culture is seen as a learned experience acquired by individuals in the  
79 course of interacting with others, it incorporates mechanisms for change while  
80 preserving traditions such as food habits or consumptions. Food habits, which are  
81 basically predictable and stable, are part of this dynamic process that paradoxically  
82 undergoes continuous and constant evolution (Fieldhouse, 1995). Being a cultural  
83 symbol (Verbeke and Lopez, 2005), food is one of the important cultural attributes that  
84 humans start learning from childhood and resist to change their food habits at an older  
85 age (Cervellon and Dube', 2005). While existing literature has primarily focused on  
86 traditional acculturation theories, there is no attempt, in our knowledge, that links the  
87 appropriation of social media to its influence on remote acculturation to sustainable  
88 food habits.

89           Food being such an important part of the acculturation process, this study  
90 explores whether social media, through information diffusion, is able to influence the  
91 behaviour of consumers towards acculturation to sustainable consumption of food,  
92 thereby encouraging consumption of healthy food as well as reduction of food waste in  
93 the household. Therefore, exploring how consumers could be influenced or driven  
94 towards sustainable consumption behaviour can be closely associated with one of the  
95 important areas of research in food security.

96           In this paper we undertake semi-structured interviews of twenty-four social  
97 media users to understand how information diffusion on social media related to  
98 cooking, eating habits, storage, preservation, consumption, new recipes, food  
99 technology and recycling facilitates acculturation to sustainable consumption  
100 behaviour. We study three groups of respondents – Indians (living in the home country),  
101 British Indians (living in the host country for more than 10 years) and white British

102 (natives of Britain) – to understand how the rampant use of social media enables  
103 exchange of information related to food and create enough awareness to share and adopt  
104 best possible behaviour with a potential to reduce food waste. Our sample for analysis  
105 consists of three distinct groups and we assess the manifestations of their acculturation  
106 process, which is influenced by information diffusion on social media. It helps us to  
107 further explore issues related to sustainable consumption behaviour among the food  
108 consumers.

109 Rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a review of the  
110 literature on traditional acculturation studies highlighting the importance of food in  
111 those studies, which in turn enables us to identify the research gaps in the literature and  
112 specific research questions to achieve the broader aims of the paper. Section 3 describes  
113 the research design and methodology used to answer the research questions stated in  
114 the preceding section. Section 4 presents our analysis along with a detailed discussion  
115 of the results, emphasising the contribution of this paper to the literature as well as the  
116 wider industry and policy analysts. We conclude in Section 5 summarising the key  
117 findings, our contribution to knowledge and practice and outline the future research  
118 direction originating from the research limitations.

119

## 120 **2. Literature review**

### 121 **2.1 Ethnic identity and traditional acculturation**

122 Many previous studies have viewed ethnic identity and acculturation as two  
123 interdependent concocts that drive consumer acculturation and behaviour (Persky and  
124 Birman, 2005; Penaloza and Atravesando, 1994: Penaloza, 1995; Phinney et al., 2001).  
125 These studies suggest that when consumers have a strong ethnic identity, they will be  
126 less acculturated to the new cultural environment compared to consumers whose ethnic  
127 identity is weak. Ethnic-identity is termed as identification with a group, which is  
128 distinguished by religion, colour, language, clothes, food habits or some other attributes  
129 that are common (Maldonado and Tansuhaj 1999). Appiah (2001) states that ethnic  
130 identity could be distinguished from an individual's behaviour and attitude that are  
131 synonymous with their core cultural values. This identity often comprises of language,  
132 religion, food, customs, dress, product use and media use among others.

133 Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) originally defined acculturation as  
134 *“those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures*

135 *come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture*  
136 *patterns of either or both groups”* (p. 149). Similarly, Berry (2005) defines  
137 acculturation as “*the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place*  
138 *as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual*  
139 *members”* (p. 698). The above definitions comprehend that acculturation emerges when  
140 one experiences cross-cultural *contact* due to physical migration from one geographical  
141 location to another, and we refer to this as traditional acculturation in the context of our  
142 research. However, in a highly globalised world, we cannot restrict “*contact*” to  
143 primarily physical contact, for instance, contact can also be made through social media  
144 platforms.

145

### 146 **2.1.1 Acculturation outcomes and strategies**

147 Previous research on traditional acculturation highlight that individuals experience  
148 varying degrees of acculturative stress such as depression, identity confusion, anxiety  
149 and feelings of being marginalized when different cultural groups interact (Berry et al.,  
150 1987; Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). In order to respond to such acculturative  
151 stress, individuals choose different acculturation strategies, which are also referred as  
152 acculturation outcomes in the literature (Berry, 2005; Berry, 2008; Cappellini and Yen,  
153 2013; Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). Berry (2008) described four responses of  
154 individuals (immigrants) undergoing acculturation such as: (i) **Assimilation**, where  
155 immigrants adopt the dominant new culture and abandon their original one, (ii)  
156 **Integration**, where they embrace both new and old cultures, (iii) **Separation**, where  
157 they withdraw from the new culture and maintain their original one or (iv)  
158 **Marginalisation**, where they entail a withdrawal from both cultures (Berry 2008). A  
159 four-pattern typology of acculturation was also proposed by Mendoza and Martinez  
160 (1981), of which three of those corresponded to Berry’s patterns: ‘cultural shift’  
161 (analogous to assimilation), ‘cultural incorporation’ (integration), ‘cultural resistance’  
162 (similar to separation), and ‘cultural transmutation’ (can be similar to marginalisation  
163 where a modification of native and alternative cultural norms create a unique  
164 subcultural entity).

165 Research on such different acculturation outcomes is predominantly seen in the  
166 area of consumer research, where existing studies have looked at how consumption of  
167 specific items, such as food (Cappellini and Yen, 2013; Laroche et al., 2005), media  
168 and clothing (Lee and Tse, 1994), demonstrate immigrants’ relations with their ethnic

169 and host culture (Rossiter and Chan, 1998). There is still an on-going debate in the  
170 literature regarding whether or not consumers or immigrants adapt to the host culture.  
171 Many of them suggest that generally the immigrants select and adopt aspects from both  
172 cultures, resulting in an integrated acculturation outcome (Penaloza and Atravesando,  
173 1994; Askegaard et al., 2005; Oswald, 1999). An exception is the study by Ustuner and  
174 Holt (2007), which demonstrates outcomes of acculturation as either *separation*, where  
175 immigrants continue to maintain their original identity through everyday consumption  
176 practices and they pursue the dominant culture through mainstream market  
177 opportunities, or *marginalisation*, where they “give up on both pursuits, resulting in a  
178 shattered identity project.” However, these acculturation outcomes could differ based  
179 on different ethnic groups, their age, gender, profession and mode of contact with the  
180 host. Very few studies have studied the influence of such factors on acculturation  
181 process, focusing mostly on minorities after migration.

182

### 183 **2.1.2 Factors influencing acculturation outcome**

184 Factors that facilitate or oppose the acculturation outcomes may differ based on  
185 immigrants’ social relations, their antecedent variables, and global consumer culture  
186 (Cappellini and Yen, 2013; Cleveland et al., 2009; Penaloza, 1994). Antecedent  
187 variables, such as age, language ability, religion, gender, employment status, time of  
188 arrival/ recency of migration and ethnic identity play a substantial role in influencing  
189 the acculturation process (Penaloza, 1994). Penaloza (1994; p49). It highlights “family,  
190 friends, media, retail businesses, schools, and churches” as some of the influencing  
191 factors affecting the acculturation process. The reason being that they represent  
192 lifestyles, values, norms as well as objects and consumer practices of both home and  
193 host culture (Cappellini and Yen, 2013).

194 Cleveland and Chang (2009) also highlighted that the relationship of  
195 immigrants with home and host culture members can influence as well as re-shape their  
196 consumption choices. Social relations can be conceptualised as strong ties (e.g. close  
197 friends) and weak ties (e.g. acquaintances) (Granovetter, 1983). Other studies have also  
198 shown the importance of social networks during different transitions (Caligiuri and  
199 Lazarova, 2002; Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). Chung and Fischer (1999)  
200 demonstrated that different ties influence consumption in different ways, for instance  
201 strong ties have a more influence over individual consumption compared to weak ties.

202 Askegaard et al. (2005) highlighted that global consumer culture could be  
203 another factor that influences the acculturation process. Owing to globalisation,  
204 consumer culture is not anymore associated with a single country. It has rather become  
205 synonymous with multi-polar consumerism representing many national cultures. Berry  
206 (2008) also suggests that global consumer culture has become such an important part  
207 of people's everyday life that it could be a "starting point of acculturation." However,  
208 it is not evident how social relations on online platforms and availability of variety of  
209 information on different culture affect the acculturation outcomes and individual  
210 consumption.

211

### 212 **2.1.3 Remote acculturation vs. conventional acculturation**

213 There are four major acculturation strategies; assimilation, integration, separation and  
214 marginalisation, which explains the conventional for of acculturation (Berry, 1980).

215 This research along with other scholarly literature have primarily focussed on migration  
216 research dimension of the acculturation covering inter-cultural contacts and inter-social  
217 group contacts mostly within a host-migrant set up. However, rapid globalisation  
218 fuelled by disruptive technologies and multipolarity in the world order have facilitated  
219 multidirectional flow of people, ideas and goods across the countries and cultures  
220 (Jensen et al. 2011). This has instigated new ways of intergroup and intercultural  
221 interactions outside the purview of migration and opened avenues for a new form of  
222 acculturation called remote acculturation. While the conventional acculturation  
223 requires first-hand contacts ((Redfield et al. 1936), remote acculturation offers endless  
224 possibilities for culturally different individuals or groups to interact through social  
225 media. Dey et al. (2018) further support this with arguments that the use of social media  
226 is helping to diminish the gap between our real and virtual life by depicting more  
227 tangible aspects of our real life through our clothes and fashions as well as how they  
228 look, their location and other physical evidences. While the remote acculturation,  
229 facilitated by the globalisation mechanisms, brings food, goods and culture closer  
230 between different countries and cultures, the subject still remains understudied mainly  
231 due to its vast influence as well as correlation with rampant growth of social media  
232 technologies.

233

234

235



236 **2.2 Acculturation and food consumption**

237 Traditional acculturation studies show how people associate food to their culture and  
238 ethnic identity more than clothes in their everyday practices, and how their food choices  
239 are more or less resistant to change (Cleveland et al., 2009; Ustuner and Holt, 2007;  
240 Penaloza, 1994). Food habits are inculcated early in life and are perpetuated throughout  
241 the life because they are considered as symbolically meaningful behaviours for a given  
242 culture (Cleveland et al., 2009; Fieldhouse, 1995). Furthermore, food is considered as  
243 an important constituent that serves as a key expression of culture. Any study involving  
244 acculturation analysis would look incomplete without paying attention to nuances of  
245 food consumption.

246         The resistant to change (or separation) is seen more with minorities with strong  
247 ethnic ties in multi-cultural environment where there is an internal drive to protect one's  
248 ethnic identity and culture (Cappellini and Yen, 2013). Such separations are more  
249 prominent in some ethnic groups than others. For example, Chung (2000) discussed that  
250 Chinese immigrants demonstrate strong ethnic retention related to food consumption  
251 when compared with other minority groups. Vieregge et al. (2009) also showed that  
252 second and even third generation of Chinese immigrants living in Switzerland  
253 consumed Chinese food daily at home as well as preferred Chinese restaurants over  
254 others as an option while eating out. Such high level of acculturation separation from  
255 western cuisine seen in Chinese population has been associated with food-centered  
256 culture where food plays a very significant role in Chinese life (Simmons, 1991).  
257 Similarly, Uhle and Grivetti (1993) compared ethnic Swiss living in Brazil and  
258 Switzerland and revealed that Brazilian Swiss preserved many of their traditional food  
259 practices even after more than a century of being geographically and culturally  
260 separated from their homeland. In contrast, Cleveland et al., (2009) through a structured  
261 equation modelling, suggested that relationship between consumption behaviour, ethnic  
262 identity and acculturation is far more complex and specific to a given food category  
263 and culture. However, most of these existing studies examining issues related to  
264 acculturation have been focussed on a narrow group of immigrants, who are minorities  
265 in the host country, leaving out other groups within the host country population, who  
266 may be exposed to different cultures through other means of communication such as  
267 Internet and social media.

268  
269

### 270 **2.2.1 Sustainable Food Consumption**

271 Sustainable consumption aims to reduce the resource intensity of production-  
272 consumption systems i.e. focus is on consuming less resources (Evans et al., 2011). It  
273 can be traced back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit where environmental impacts of  
274 consumption patterns in industrialised countries were highlighted. This was soon  
275 followed by establishing a strategic priority of “transforming unsustainable patterns of  
276 consumption in 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg”  
277 (Evans et al., 2011). “Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)” was identified  
278 as one of its three overarching objectives and a 10-year framework of programmes  
279 (10YFP) on SCP was developed for implementing SCP objectives (Evans et al., 2017).  
280 SCP plan of implementation clearly distinguished between sustainable production and  
281 sustainable consumption, the latter being more associated with responsibilities of  
282 consuming subjects which can be further broken down into ‘consumer attitude’,  
283 ‘consumer behaviour’ and ‘consumer choice’ (Evans et al., 2017). The recent  
284 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 12) also aims to safeguard sustainable  
285 consumption and production patterns in food systems.

286 In the context of sustainable food consumption, consumption of organic food or  
287 local food can fall under this category as they use less resources during production  
288 phase, e.g. no artificial fertiliser or pesticide input in organic production system, less  
289 food miles in local food consumption and at the same time such food are more nutritious  
290 and healthy. Focus of sustainable food consumption also extends beyond production  
291 types and covers reduction in food waste (Evans et al., 2017). Most of the previous  
292 research has predominantly focused on individual consumers attitude, behaviour or  
293 choice (Hugner et al., 2007; Jackson, 2005). Effect of culture, context, technology and  
294 available infrastructure in a given society that influences consumers’ choices has not  
295 been extensively covered.

296 Preparation and consumption of food, also known as foodways, facilitates  
297 interactions within a community on a variety of levels and in many ways by giving  
298 useful insights into the people who perform these acts (Ishak et al., 2013). The media  
299 is believed to encourage sharing of various ethnic foods through foodways (Ishak et al.,  
300 2013). Therefore, the understanding consumer choices and impact of culture,  
301 technology and (remote) acculturation in the given context and society becomes  
302 important for addressing sustainable food consumption goals.

303

### 304 **2.3 Acculturation and information diffusion on social media**

305 Despite previous findings stating acculturation to be a two-way process of change, it  
306 has primarily concentrated on the process of adaption of a host culture, customs or  
307 traditions by minorities such as immigrants while coming in contact with the dominant  
308 majority. In an era of globalisation, the need of physical contact is not necessary to  
309 foster the changes in individuals. The emerging forces of technology and trade now  
310 enables cultural exchange in absence of direct and continuous contact that often  
311 associates with population migration. This modern type of (remote) acculturation  
312 involves indirect and/or sporadic contact between the groups that are geographically  
313 separated. (Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012). How people respond to their contact with  
314 other cultures without physically migrating, as a minority in the host country, remains  
315 highly unexplored in the literature (Li and Tsai, 2015; Kizgin et al., 2018). Internet is  
316 one of the outcomes of globalisation, which has facilitated users across the globe to be  
317 in contact with each other and create and exchange the content without physically  
318 migrating. Social media has emerged to become one of the prominent forces that aid  
319 cultural adaptation or acculturation process (Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2011; Chen,  
320 Bennett, and Maton, 2008; Tufekci, 2008). Social media users are now able to widen  
321 their social networks and get connected to new information and ideas, which were  
322 inaccessible to them earlier (Kizgin et al., 2018; Leonardi, 2014; Treem and Leonardi,  
323 2012). Moreover, a recent study (Miller, 2016) argues that we should never consider  
324 social media as a place or world separated or different from our ordinary life as it has  
325 become a place where we live and where everyday life happens. From the purview of  
326 anthropology, and with the influence on anthropological bias, social media is arguably  
327 bringing the world little closer (Miller, 2016). This study perceives the influence of the  
328 social media in terms of content or information and not merely as a platform for  
329 information dissemination. This makes this study imperative and novel in its own way  
330 to throw light on virtual or remote acculturation that is influenced by social media  
331 usage. Clearly, the aim is not to contradict the existing studies of traditional  
332 acculturation but to widen the knowledge on the evolving nature of acculturation.

333 Online social networks now have become a platform where hundreds of  
334 millions of Internet users create, distribute and consume user-generated content. Whilst  
335 social media has increased the accessibility to infinite source of information in an  
336 unparalleled scale, it plays a vital role in the process of information diffusion by  
337 enhancing the exchange of information and diverse perspectives (Geetika, Walia and

338 Bhatia, 2014). As stated by many previous studies, there seems to be a correlation  
339 between node characteristic and the information diffusion in terms of velocity of the  
340 message and magnitude of spread – for an example information shared by highly active  
341 users of social networks gets viral quickly than inactive or less active users (Yang et  
342 al., 2010; Henry, Stattner and Collard, 2017))

343         Ascertaining the most influential information disseminators in social media  
344 networks is imperative for monitoring and controlling efficient diffusion of information  
345 (Guille et al., 2013). Which means a social media campaign can extract more benefits  
346 by targeting influencers who can help in triggering information cascade for further  
347 adoption by online users. Whilst many studies have developed numerous models and  
348 techniques on information diffusion in social networks (Guille et al., 2013), no previous  
349 research has focused on how information diffusion can help in acculturation of  
350 sustainable consumption behaviour among the social media users.

351         The preceding discussion leaves a substantial scope in studying how spread of  
352 information on social media help in acculturation to sustainable consumption behaviour  
353 – mainly focusing on food consumption.

354

#### 355 **2.4 Key research gaps and research questions**

356 The literature review reveals that there are a number of studies that have covered  
357 traditional acculturation, however, little or no research was found, which clearly  
358 explained the influence of social media in the acculturation process of non-immigrants.  
359 Whilst “remote acculturation” (Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012) mainly addresses the  
360 cultural exchange remotely, there is a dearth of research that needs to explain how  
361 “remote acculturation” is influenced by information diffusion on social media (Li and  
362 Tsai, 2015) and what role it plays in food acculturation or acculturation to sustainable  
363 food consumption behaviour. Such understanding will also help in addressing some of  
364 the food security objectives and sustainable development goals - SDG 12, such as  
365 changing consumer behaviour towards making a more sustainable choice and reducing  
366 food waste. On the basis of these, this study derives four main research questions as  
367 below;

368 RQ1: In what ways social media influence acculturation?

369 RQ2: How does social media influence food acculturation?

370 RQ3: What are the drivers and barriers to food acculturation on social media?

371 RQ4: How information diffusion on social media impacts acculturation to sustainable  
372 food consumption behaviour?  
373

### 374 **3. Research Methodology**

375 This research undertakes an in-depth qualitative research methodology. As the research  
376 aims to understand *how* social media, through information diffusion, influences  
377 acculturation rather than *how many* feel influenced, a qualitative approach seems to be  
378 more suitable for the nature of questions being asked (Silverman, 2013). The real  
379 motive to select this method was the diligence and wholeness of the data collected  
380 through qualitative methods that allows any inconsistencies and irregularity to be  
381 captured (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). This sense of  
382 comprehensiveness in data also helps in effectively establishing the context  
383 surrounding the observations (Miles *et al.*, 2014; Cassell *et al.*, 2006).

384 The analysis was aimed at examining the influence of social media on  
385 individuals' food consumption behaviour within ethnic group settings. The study  
386 considered using interpretivism for this research because interpretivist paradigm  
387 focuses on understanding "the world of human experience" (Cohen and Manion, 1994:  
388 p36). Creswell (2003) and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) also argue that  
389 interpretivist researchers discover reality through participant's views, their own  
390 background and experiences. The chosen method purely aligned with the study's  
391 primary research goal to understand participants' view on social media, information  
392 dissemination and influence of consumption behaviour through investigators' expertise  
393 around the topic.

394

#### 395 **3.1 Data Collection**

396 Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the respondents as they  
397 provide an appropriate method to gain authentic information about their social media  
398 experiences (Scott and Morrison, 2007). It provides the flexibility to investigate some  
399 of the questions in detail as well as skip or omit questions where appropriate, but  
400 generally follows a pre-determined list of questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).  
401 Furthermore, such interview format offers the respondents a sense of informality due  
402 to a conversational tone (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Limitations such as  
403 researcher's biasness as well as participants' reluctance to be completely honest to a

404 stranger (Salkind, 2006) were addressed through opportunities created by the  
405 interviewers for capturing extemporaneous conversation, covering themes that were  
406 considered important to concerned respondents (Mason, 2002).

407 Mixed purposeful sampling technique was used to interview participants who  
408 were social media users geographically resident in India and United Kingdom. This  
409 technique was selected because it combines two or more sampling strategies for  
410 deriving evidences to achieve the objectives of the study by facilitating triangulation  
411 and flexibility in meeting the needs of different stakeholders (Patton, 2002). In this case  
412 it involved maximum variation sampling and random sampling to increase the  
413 credibility of the results. Following the study by Brewer (2000), ethical standards were  
414 maintained, and all respondents were explained that their involvement was purely  
415 voluntary. Information sheet was provided to all the participants well before the  
416 interview process and an informed consent was obtained before the interview.

417

### 418 ***3.1.1 Interview Protocol***

419 Twenty-four respondents were interviewed based on the demographics, heterogeneity  
420 and amount of exposure to social media. They comprised of eight from each group of:  
421 (1) Indians (living in the home country); (2) British Indians (living in the host country  
422 for more than 10 years); and (3) white British (natives of Britain). White British were  
423 selected because they constitute 82% of the UK total population according to census  
424 2011. British Indians with a length of more than 10 years stay in the United Kingdom  
425 was considered because many previous studies (Kuo and Roysircar 2006; Fosset 2006;  
426 Besvegis and Pavlopoulos 2008; Cortes, Rogler and Malgady, 1994) have positively  
427 associated acculturation with length of stay in the host countries. The study by Kuo and  
428 Roysircar (2006) found that migrants who had stayed longer in a host country had more  
429 acculturation advantages. Although, none of the previous studies researched  
430 acculturation in the context of food consumption behaviour and social media usage,  
431 some of them have associated positivity towards the host culture with the length of stay  
432 in a foreign culture (Cortes, Rogler and Malgady, 1994). Similarly, Ouarasse and Vijver  
433 (2004a, b), Ward and Kennedy (1993) and Liebkind, (2001) reason that any  
434 sociocultural integration is largely influenced by one of the factors such as length of  
435 stay in that culture. Moreover, a study by Miglietta and Tartaglia (2008) found that  
436 length of stay is one of the factors that might be needed for acquisition of cultural  
437 acquaintance, which in turn, may be increased by the consumption of mass media.

438 Furthermore, a study to understand correlation between the length of stay and cultural  
439 integration among migrants in Greece revealed that the percentage of cultural  
440 integration increased over the duration of stay (from 31% for 1-5 years of stay to 52%  
441 for more than 10 years of stay).

442 The respondents were interviewed both face to face as well as using web as a  
443 platform based on their preferences and geographical locations. Initially, participants  
444 were interviewed once. However, based on the transcripts, follow up interviews were  
445 also conducted. Face to face interviews were conducted within ideal surroundings,  
446 where respondents were made comfortable, as comfort of interviewee is considered an  
447 important constituent of a successful interview (Mason, 2002). Interviews focussed on  
448 four key themes, which were: (1) social media's influence acculturation; (2) social  
449 media's influence on food acculturation; (3) drivers and barriers to food acculturation  
450 on social media; (4) and how/whether information diffusion on social media aids  
451 acculturation to sustainable food consumption behaviour? Interview themes were also  
452 explained to the participants in the context of the study being interested in  
453 understanding the experience, drivers, barriers, and synergies of an individual in order  
454 to study their experience of a new food culture and to what extent social media plays a  
455 role in it (See Appendix 1). Each of the interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes  
456 with an aim to collect views and experience of the participants around social media  
457 usage and its influence on food acculturation.

458

### 459 ***3.1.2 Demographic details of Interviewees***

460 Culture is considered to have the most reflective influence on consumer behaviour  
461 (Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard, 2005; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Therefore,  
462 three groups of participants were selected that represented cultural diversities. Selecting  
463 the three groups of participants i.e. Indians (living in the home country), British Indians  
464 (living in the host country for more than 10 years), and white British (natives of Britain),  
465 was aimed at understanding how individuals and groups integrate and/or switch  
466 between multiple cultural narratives without physically travelling or having face-to-  
467 face interactions too often. To avoid gender bias participants consisted of 12 females  
468 and 12 males with the youngest one at 21 years and the oldest at 66. They are mostly  
469 from cities with facilities of broadband or mobile broadband connections. There were  
470 10 participants in the age group of 21-30, five in the age group of 31-40, two in the age  
471 group of 41-50, three in the age group of 51-60, and four in the age group of 61-69 (see

472 Table 1). Their length of experience in social media usage ranged from one year to 9  
 473 years, whereas educational qualifications ranged from undergraduate to doctoral  
 474 degrees.

475

476 **Table 1. Demographic details of the interviewees**

Nationality	Code	Gender	Age	Residence	SM Use (Yrs)	Education
British	BR1	F	25	UK	6	UG
	BR2	M	33	UK	8	PG+
	BR3	M	60	UK	3	PG
	BR4	F	40	UK	7	UG
	BR5	M	21	UK	5	UG
	BR6	F	26	UK	7	PG+
	BR7	F	63	UK	1	PG+
	BR8	M	44	UK	8	UG
Indian	IN1	M	55	India	2	PG
	IN2	M	30	India	6	PG
	IN3	F	26	India	7	PG
	IN4	F	38	India	4	PG+
	IN5	F	57	India	1	PG
	IN6	F	28	India	6	UG
	IN7	M	22	India	3	UG
	IN8	M	62	India	2	UG
British Indian	BI1	F	21	UK	7	UG
	BI2	F	28	UK	8	PG
	BI3	M	35	UK	8	PG
	BI4	F	26	UK	6	UG
	BI5	M	42	UK	6	UG
	BI6	M	37	UK	9	PG+
	BI7	M	61	UK	3	UG
	BI8	F	66	UK	2	PG

477

### 478 3.2 Data Analysis

479 The data collected from the participants were analysed using a template analysis, which  
 480 features coding that evolves throughout the analysis, helping identify any emerging



481 thematic relationships (King, 2004). The study employed the process of hybrid coding  
482 (both pre-set and open) in NVivo software. A deductive approach was followed in the  
483 prior development of themes, which allowed the researchers to derive a list of pre-set  
484 codes from the literature review, before beginning the data collection process (King,  
485 2004). As the analysis of transcripts progressed, an inductive approach of open coding  
486 was followed to conceptualise, compare, and categorise data by using a repetitive  
487 process to define and examine relations among different categories in the dataset  
488 (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Strauss, 1987). Such approach allowed the researchers to  
489 revise templates, modify or eliminate codes whether necessary and allowed new themes  
490 to emerge. The engagement with respondents was emphasised from initial contact to  
491 facilitate their preparedness to reveal and share their perceptions and experiences  
492 regarding various aspects of the research. Then the study involved building a consensus  
493 to review, revise, and finalise categories to define overarching themes.

494

## 495 **4. Analysis**

### 496 **4.1 Traditional acculturation vs. acculturation in social media**

497 Following Berry (2008), we consider acculturation as a multifaceted process that may  
498 not always lead to assimilation of the host culture, and definitely not a linear process  
499 leading to a melting pot (Penaloza, 1994). It states that the process of acculturation can  
500 possibly lead to various outcomes such as assimilation (when immigrants adopt host  
501 culture and leave their original culture), integration (adopt both new and original  
502 cultures), separation (withdraw from the host culture and continue with their original  
503 culture) and marginalisation (when they withdraw from both the cultures). However,  
504 analysing the data based on the semi-structured interviews reflect that the trait of  
505 marginalisation was missing from the acculturation on social media, owing to the nature  
506 of acculturation that perceived to be purely voluntary. Whilst traditional acculturation  
507 theories reflected ‘external push’ (Hartwell et al. 2011) among the immigrants, majority  
508 of participants in this study demonstrated ‘internal pull’, which also means that social  
509 media facilitates the exchange of information without compelling any online users to  
510 acculturate. Most importantly, respondents did not show any sign of stress or negative  
511 emotions as compared to immigrants as stated in previous studies (Croucher, 2008;  
512 Kramer, 2003). Three key themes that emerged out of our analysis are explained below.  
513 The results of this study reveal that respondents often acted rational as well as

514 opportunists without the sense of any obligation to conveniently choose cultural  
515 attributes that suited their expectations and living standards within a multicultural  
516 ambience. The majority of the respondents mainly exhibited the sign of ‘integration’  
517 (Berry, 2008) to keep the amalgamation of both the ancestral and the host culture.  
518 Furthermore, their interaction in the multicultural environment was not driven by  
519 influences, but rather by expectations defined by a given context.

520

#### 521 **4.2 Influence of social media on acculturation**

522 All the participants interviewed were users of social media platforms. They primarily  
523 used social media to view multimedia content, initiate conversations, and exchange  
524 information that could help them in making new contacts and learning about new  
525 cultures, traditions, food, and customs. In addition to communicating with social  
526 contacts, they also used social media to browse third party contents related to diverse  
527 topics with a hope that it would render an inconspicuous means of connecting with new  
528 people, cultural groups, and learn more about them.

529

530 *“I am unable to travel to explore new countries and meet with people to learn new*  
531 *cultures, new food, and new customs. Therefore, I have become a member of many*  
532 *intercultural groups on social media where I learn all things without requiring*  
533 *travelling. The best part of learning about and trying out new cultures on social media*  
534 *is that we have the full freedom to choose what we want. For example, we are not forced*  
535 *to eat different food or wear different clothes and the prerogatives of having or not falls*  
536 *on us”.*

537

*(Respondent IN4)*

538 Irrespective of the ethnic background, respondents between 21 and 40 years of age  
539 appeared to be more likely to adapt new cultures and customs whereas their  
540 counterparts above 55 years of age showed reluctance to embrace new cultures, customs  
541 and food. Whilst most of the respondents agreed that social media plays an important  
542 role in helping them to learn and adapt new cultures, three of them did not agree with  
543 the former, and two were unsure and had neutral opinion about acculturation in social  
544 media. Most of the female respondents showed more flexibility towards adapting to  
545 new cultures and traditions compared to their male counterparts.

546 All three ethnic groups demonstrated more inclination towards integration than  
547 assimilation, separation or marginalisation, and cited freedom and flexibility provided  
548 by the information availability on social media as the primary reason for it. They further  
549 viewed acculturation through social media is less stressful and less embarrassing to try  
550 out new food habits or cooking or consumption behaviour because it gives them privacy  
551 and more time to get acculturated. Eighteen respondents who said they were  
552 comfortable using advanced technologies and gadgets were found to be more inclined  
553 towards experimenting with cultures and customs from foreign countries. Elevated  
554 interest of learning among Indian respondents about western cultures, cuisines, clothing  
555 and arts were found synonymous within the age group of 21-30, who spent considerable  
556 time on social media platforms. Whereas White British and British Indians viewed  
557 occasional foreign travel, multi-cultural social contacts, and spending some time in the  
558 host country had synergistic effect on enhancing their openness towards adapting to  
559 different cultures.

560 *“10 years back I had no idea that I would be living in the United Kingdom one day. I*  
561 *remember getting fascinated by some of the beautiful pictures of this country my friends*  
562 *living here used to share on Orkut. My interest to know more about this country grew*  
563 *when I first interacted with a common British friend on social media, and then it further*  
564 *strengthened after my first client visit here. After living here for some time, I can now*  
565 *happily identify with both India and the UK”.*

566 *(Respondent B15)*

567 Four White British respondents reasoned about the influence of viral posts, religious  
568 pages and groups, and cultural campaigns on social media in generating interest among  
569 the social media users to learn more about other religions, traditions and cultures. One  
570 of them even attributed one of his friends’ assimilation to a new religion and culture to  
571 the Facebook page and posts of a religious charity organisation.

572

573 *“I know of a friend who really got liking to a religious page on Facebook. He once told*  
574 *me he was touched by the traditions, beliefs and preaching of this organisation. After*  
575 *remaining as a follower for some years it was no surprise for us to see him converting*  
576 *into the new religion. After changing his name, he now happily wears ethnic costumes*  
577 *and have tuned into a complete vegan”.*

578

(Respondent BR8)

579

580 From our analysis it shows that all respondents could relate to the six types of social  
581 media including social networking sites: content communications, collaborative  
582 projects, blogs, virtual social worlds, and virtual game worlds, as stated by Kaplan and  
583 Haenlein (2010). However, most of the respondents were either unaware of the virtual  
584 game worlds' prominence or were unsure about how if it at all influenced their  
585 perspective about other cultures of customs. Overall, it emerged clearly from their  
586 responses that different social media platforms necessitate different levels of social  
587 connectivity whilst influencing the process of acculturation differently.

588

#### 589 **4.3 Influence of social media acculturation on food consumption**

590 Respondents from different ethnic groups showed many similarities as well as  
591 differences in perception or opinion regarding the influence of social media on their  
592 acculturation to food and sustainable consumption. The Indians preferred social media  
593 to social interaction and cited that abundance of information on social media gives them  
594 freedom and time to like and consume the food of their choice. Whereas British Indians  
595 and White British respondents preferred social interaction marginally to social media  
596 usage to get influenced by food from other cultures – however, agreeing that social  
597 media is changing the way they perceived it earlier.

598         Whilst all three groups interviewed agreed that the shared content on social  
599 media has increased their confidence in trying out new recipes without being exposed  
600 to awkwardness and discomfort, their opinion about inculcating consumption behaviour  
601 solely through social media differed. British Indians demonstrated more openness to  
602 adapt to Western foods and food habits compared to the Indians. However, for Indian  
603 respondents the content on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube influenced  
604 their adaptability to Western food habits more than their counterparts in British Indians  
605 and White British respondents. Whereas, British Indians cited integration of social  
606 media information and direct social interaction to be more empowering for  
607 acculturation to different food habits and consumption behaviour.

608

609 *“I really wanted to try lasagne after seeing my friend’s Facebook post. It looked*  
610 *yummy. Unfortunately, I could not have it outside because in our culture we don’t eat*  
611 *beef. So, I browsed recipes on YouTube and customised my own recipe by replacing*

612 *beef with paneer and chicken, which came out really delicious. I became popular*  
613 *among my friends for my fusion recipe of lasagne and many of my friends now follow*  
614 *it”*

615 *(Respondent BI2)*

616

617 *“When I arrived in this country, I knew only how to cook in Indian style. But friends*  
618 *and roommates taught me various ways of western cooking that looked easy and healthy*  
619 *to me. And now I can have all the information I need from social media about Indian*  
620 *as well as western style of cooking, which means I have best of both without*  
621 *compromising either on taste or on health”.*

622 *(Respondent BI16)*

623

624 Age group emerged as an important factor for food acculturation with younger  
625 generations showing more flexibility towards integration than the older ones. At the  
626 same time, when asked, older generation of respondents residing in the UK exhibited  
627 more leaning towards integration compared to their counterparts in India. However,  
628 respondents who are older than 60 years mainly exhibited the signs of ‘separation’  
629 (Berry, 2008).

630

631 *“I like to have Indian food sometimes and tried once to learn it on YouTube. But let me*  
632 *tell you it’s a real pain, requires a lot of patience. Not feasible at all when you come*  
633 *back from work all tired and not in a mood to spend some good time in the kitchen. I*  
634 *would rather prefer baking over cooking a curry”.*

635 *(Respondent BR7)*

636 White British respondents agreed that social media information related to issues  
637 such as food recycling, hunger and poverty etc. influenced the way they looked at the  
638 food consumption. The Indian respondents were primarily driven by information  
639 related to healthy cooking, nutrient preservation, food storage and easy cooking for  
640 adapting to western cooking and food habits.

641 In terms of preferences for social media platforms White British respondents  
642 were more influenced by food blogs and dedicated websites, whereas Indians cited  
643 Facebook as main source of influence, and British Indians preferred YouTube to other

644 platforms for the information shared. While no concluding evidence were found why  
645 different groups preferred a specific social media platform, our analyses points towards  
646 certain parameters that could be establishing correlation among the usage patterns.  
647 According to the Global Digital Report 2018 by ComScore, Indians users of Facebook  
648 spend on an average approximately 13% more time on Facebook than their White  
649 British counterparts. Whilst Indian social media users demonstrated clear preference to  
650 browsing food related content on smart devices, their White British counterparts had  
651 no clear preference for the same. It is worth mentioning that Indian respondents had an  
652 average of 560 contacts on their Facebook account whereas White British respondents  
653 had approximately 325 Facebook contacts. Furthermore, Indian respondents had more  
654 numbers of intercultural contacts or friends and spent almost double the amount of time  
655 on Facebook compared to White British respondents. It could easily point at our  
656 previous assessment that intercultural interactions outside the purview of migration  
657 opens avenues for remote acculturation (Jensen et al. 2011). This further supports our  
658 identification of having multicultural social contacts a driver (Table 2) for remote  
659 acculturation. The White British respondents showed clear preference for browsing  
660 specific information over the content shared by their network or friends – which in turn  
661 points towards the salient features of food blogs and dedicated websites. British  
662 Indians’ preference for YouTube over Facebook can be linked to the outcome of the  
663 UK Social Media Demographic Study 2016, which reveals YouTube (at 85%) as the  
664 favourite social media platform for adults browsing web within the United Kingdom  
665 compared to Facebook (78%). However, many commonalities were found between all  
666 three groups agreeing to social media as a powerful information source that influenced  
667 their acculturation to new food habits that included preparation, consumption and  
668 preservation.

669

670 *“When I look for information related to new recipes or food I tend to be very selective.*  
671 *I prefer specialised websites and blogs over Facebook just to avoid information*  
672 *overload”.*

673

*(Respondent BR6)*

674

675 *“I have learnt to cook authentic Indian chicken curry from a food blog. The best part*  
676 *of this learning is that, no stress involved and I can make it as hot as I like to have and,*  
677 *which might not be possible while trying out at restaurant. Now I have many versions*

678 *of my own curry, which my British friends rejoice”.*

679 *(Respondent BR6)*

680

681 It emerged clearly from the analysis that social media has a strong influence on  
682 the respondents’ acculturation to new food, while offering them with discretion to  
683 choose both convenience and traditional food (Laroche, Kim, and Tomiuk, 1998). From  
684 the analysis of data it also appeared that respondents felt social media to be a  
685 ‘facilitator’ and not ‘imposer’ as far as their acculturation to food was concerned. The  
686 analysis also heaved conflicting viewpoint from same age group of respondents  
687 residing in different countries. Respondents over 60 who are residents of UK cited  
688 ‘taste’ as the primary influencer of trying new food whereas their counterparts in India  
689 reasoned with ‘health benefits’ to try continental food. However, in the both cases  
690 respondents exhibited ‘separation’ after the initial experience of adapting to different  
691 food – although for different reasons.

692

693 *“After watching the health benefits of continental cuisines on social media, we tried it*  
694 *once while staying in a hotel and it was completely tasteless...no flavour...no colour at*  
695 *all. After having Indian food for so many years it is difficult for us to eat this kind of*  
696 *food.”*

697 *(Respondent IN8)*

698

699 Participants acknowledged that social media augmented their familiarity with  
700 other cultures and food – which has helped them in adapting to new food habits during  
701 their overseas travel, and that somehow confirms that the acculturation actually starts  
702 well before the immigration with consumption of host culture products (Penaloza,  
703 1994). However, while travelling they confessed to have searched for the ancestral food  
704 as their first point of eating to start with. The analysis also revealed that the first  
705 experience of having food of different culture further shapes respondents’ flexibility  
706 and pace towards food acculturation. Which means a bad experience during the first  
707 attempt at a new food decreases the flexibility and pace of their acculturation whereas  
708 a good experience does exactly the opposite. YouTube emerged as the most sought after  
709 social media platform for searching recipes of food from other cultures. At the same

710 time 10 respondents acknowledged that multimedia content on Facebook, Twitter and  
 711 Instagram urged them to learn more about new cooking methods and cuisines.  
 712 Participants revealed that language acted as both driver and barrier in the acculturation  
 713 process (see Table 2). Whilst language acts as a barrier or stress during the traditional  
 714 acculturation with immigrants (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), it is a driver of acculturation  
 715 on social media by offering content in both host and ethnic languages.

716

717 **Table 2.** Drivers and barriers to food acculturation on social media

Drivers	Barriers
• Weak ethnic ties	• Strong ethnic ties
• Soft religious inclination	• Strong religious inclination
• Unrestricted cultural consumption	• Cultural food segregation
• Social media expert	• Low social media skills
• More time spent online	• Less time spent online
• Multicultural social contacts	• No multicultural social networks
• Multi-lingual content	• Weak communication skills
• Technology savvy	• Technology skills
• Good first experience	• Bad first experience
• Low age group	• High age group
• Loves cooking own food	• Low interest in cooking
• Adventurous while eating out	• Sense of insecurity while eating out
• Frequent overseas travel	• Ingredients unavailability

718

719 **4.4 Information diffusion on social media and sustainable behavioural change**

720 All respondents understood the necessity and importance of social networks on the  
 721 spreading of information through multiple sharing and interactions. From four general  
 722 types of information diffusion: herd behaviour, information cascades, diffusion of  
 723 innovation, and epidemics (Zafarani et al., 2014), analysis revealed that the types of  
 724 content respondents accessed and shared can mainly be attributed to herd behaviour,  
 725 information cascades and diffusion of innovation. Twenty out of twenty four  
 726 respondents interviewed said they liked, trusted and approved of the information related  
 727 to food shared by their friends on social networks (information cascades). They agreed  
 728 that abundance of information on social media have influenced their food habits,  
 729 cooking styles, and outlook towards food in some way or other.



730

731 *“I always loved Indian cuisines. But often I used to try ready-to-eat and heat-and-eat*  
732 *meals, which were spicy and came with added preservatives. Once, while browsing new*  
733 *recipes on Facebook, I came across a live cooking class where I learned to cook from*  
734 *scratch. Now I feel cooking from scratch is not a big deal. I fell it also has more*  
735 *nutritional value and tastes good too”.*

736

*(Respondent BR2)*

737

738 Whilst most of the respondents agreed that information or content shared by their  
739 contacts influenced their perceptions, any viral content (diffusion of innovation) they  
740 came across sought more attention compared to friends’ posts. It has emerged from the  
741 analysis that user generated content such as photos, videos, reviews, information, and  
742 tags that are created by end-users influenced respondents’ speed of acculturation to  
743 sustainable behaviour. According to the respondents, information related to best before  
744 date awareness, cooking from scratch, nutritional benefits, healthy lifestyle or wellness,  
745 deep-freezing, and advanced storage techniques help them in developing sustainable  
746 consumption behaviour. Whilst respondents residing in India looked for information  
747 mainly related to storage and freezing, their counterparts in the UK were more  
748 influenced by information pertaining to fresh cooking, best before date awareness.

749

750 *“I have seen a lot of videos on social media related to advanced way of storing food*  
751 *for a longer time. On YouTube and Facebook, I have seen many videos from western*  
752 *countries depicting new ways of freezing, preservation, and storage. Here in India our*  
753 *food generally gets spoiled quickly due to climatic conditions and watching those*  
754 *videos helped me a lot”.*

755

*(Respondent IN6)*

756 Most of the respondents interviewed said they either regularly browsed or invariably  
757 came across content related to food waste and sustainable consumption in the form of  
758 videos, photographs, blogs, live videos, stories, and cooking classes. However, more  
759 than 90 percent of the respondents agreed that content shared by their role models such  
760 as celebrities, sportspersons, religious leaders, celebrity chefs and global organisations  
761 influenced the most. Whilst almost all respondents acknowledged the influence of role

762 models on their behaviour, the age group of 20-35 exhibited strong affiliation to such  
763 viral contents. Almost 60 percent respondents agreed that information or content that  
764 go viral mostly carry meaningful information for the community. Moreover, our  
765 analysis reveals that social media not only helps in information diffusion but also offers  
766 synergistic effects for its users when combined with real-life interactions with people  
767 from other cultures and belief systems.

768 *“I never understood the concept of recycling leftover food that I used to bin. But after*  
769 *seeing some of the posts by my Indian friends that linked wasting of food to some kind*  
770 *of evil or sin, I have tried to recycle and store my leftover food. It does make a lot of*  
771 *sense to me now and even more after watching videos showing hunger and malnutrition*  
772 *in many countries around the world”.*

773 *(Respondent BR1)*

774 It emerged clearly from our analysis that respondents residing in India were more  
775 influenced by information pertaining to storage and preservation techniques whereas  
776 Indians residing in the UK were more influenced by nutrition, wellness and health  
777 benefits to carve out change in their consumption behaviour. Almost all respondents  
778 reasoned that social media is the primary source of information that aids increased  
779 awareness related to environmental pollution, sustainability, and food waste, which  
780 guides them gradually towards developing sustainable consumption behaviour (see  
781 Table 3). One respondent also cited, ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ campaign that focussed  
782 primarily on raising awareness about the consequences of food waste by rendering  
783 consumers the information and knowledge required in order to change their behaviour,  
784 as an example that has largely impacted her behaviour.

785 *“Earlier, I never had this notion of eating food items after the “best before date”. But*  
786 *I was surprised to see one of my Indian housemates eating fruits and veges even after*  
787 *the best before date. When I searched about more information on Google, it took me to*  
788 *the Facebook page of my university where I could learn that we can consume the food*  
789 *as long as it is not spoiled. Now I don’t mind eating as long as it looks good to eat”.*

790 *(Respondent BR5)*

791

792 **Table 3.** Illustrations of acculturation in social media

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Illustrative quote</b>	<b>Acculturation themes</b>
<b>IN4</b>	India	“The best part of learning about and trying out new cultures on social media is that we have the full freedom to choose what we want...”	Acculturation in social media
<b>BI2</b>	U.K.	“I browsed recipes on YouTube and customised my own recipe by replacing beef with paneer and chicken, which came out really delicious.”	Food acculturation in social media
<b>BR6</b>	U.K.	“I have learnt to cook authentic Indian chicken curry from YouTube. The best part of this learning is that, no stress involved and I can make it as hot as I like to have.”	Food acculturation in social media
<b>BR1</b>	U.K.	“I never understood the concept of recycling leftover food that I used to bin...I have tried to recycle and store my leftover food.... after watching videos showing hunger and malnutrition in many countries around the world.”	Information diffusion and acculturation to sustainable behaviour
<b>BR5</b>	U.K.	“I never had this notion of eating food items after the “best before date”. ...Now I don’t mind eating as long as it looks good to eat.”	Information diffusion and acculturation to sustainable behaviour

793

794 **5. Discussion**

795 The current research investigated the aspects of remote acculturation in the context of  
 796 its correlation with social media. With vast expansion of the Internet, social media aids  
 797 the extension of an individual’s social network to a scale that was previously  
 798 unimaginable (Kane et al., 2014). This extension enables social media users to widen  
 799 their social networks using social media and get connected to new information and ideas  
 800 that were previously inaccessible (Richey and Ravishankar, 2017; Leonardi, 2014;  
 801 Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Furthermore, the emergence of social media has presented  
 802 an opportunity for the indirect and/or discontinuous interaction between cultures in the  
 803 “globalized, de-territorialized world” to enable remote acculturation, despite the  
 804 interacting cultural groups being geographically separated (Appadurai, 1991, p. 196;  
 805 Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012). Although, this research primarily focussed on one  
 806 parameter of acculturation that is food, it bolstered the validity of remote acculturation  
 807 through its findings. Locher et al., (2005) also stated that any research on acculturation

808 would be incomplete without involving the element of food consumption, owing to the  
809 significance of food to an individual's well-being.

810 The study extended our understanding of remote acculturation supported by the  
811 findings of Ferguson and Bornstein (2015) that states intermittent and indirect  
812 intercultural contact can shape a new form of acculturation or remote acculturation.  
813 Whilst the findings of this study evidenced social media can help in creating a virtual  
814 social setting to aid remote acculturation, it also aligned with arguments (Dey et al.  
815 2018) that social media is narrowing the gap between our virtual and real life in many  
816 different ways. This study added a new dimension to existing acculturation research by  
817 adding how social media aids food acculturation and influences in building or  
818 modifying sustainable consumption behaviour through information diffusion. This  
819 study represents a first step to extend the scope of integrating social media with remote  
820 acculturation, food acculturation and consumption behaviour – which can be scaled-up  
821 to exert a high impact in terms of addressing global food security issues. Through this  
822 study the potential vehicles of remote acculturation could be found in the production  
823 and consumption of content on social media platforms. Moreover, it is imperative to  
824 have a replication or extension study that can not only validate the findings of a previous  
825 research but also help to avoid replication crisis by assessing the robustness of such  
826 findings, and thereby extending those results theoretically (Bonnet, 2012; Duncan et al.  
827 2014).

828

### 829 **5.1 Theoretical implications**

830 The core focus and motivation behind studying these aspects of acculturation is  
831 deeply rooted in understanding how acculturation occurs on social media and how  
832 influential it is in the absence of direct contacts between intercultural groups. By doing  
833 so this study advances the current knowledge in remote acculturation as well as in food  
834 acculturation. With growing online users, the expansion of social contacts does not fall  
835 hostage to the boundaries of country, culture, food habits, ideologies or customs. In  
836 addition, the availability of information, new ideas, innovations and ideologies are not  
837 restricted to social contacts. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter,  
838 YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, WeChat among others act as harbingers of information  
839 dissemination with strong inter-personal influence. As consumers associate with social  
840 media users with diverse background they get opportunity to engage others with  
841 different mind-sets, experiences, viewpoints and expertise (Kane et al., 2014). These

842 new interfaces of information diffusion, on integrating various sources of information,  
843 believed to enhance the opportunities for the unearthing, learning and expansion of new  
844 ideas (Dahlander and Piezunka, 2014; Mount and Martinez, 2014). This process  
845 unvaryingly influences exchange of new ideas, best practices, cultural eloquences and  
846 behavioural traits. It further contributes towards building literature by linking two of  
847 these with information theory and sustainable consumption behaviour.  
848 Notwithstanding the limited scope of this study to select three cultural group for  
849 research, this can easily be generalised to cover other intercultural groups, geographical  
850 setting and other cardinal issues. We argue that production and consumption of social  
851 media content along with exposure to social media platforms are directly proportional  
852 to the amount of openness for food acculturation. Additionally, the abundance of  
853 information on social media has substantial influence on how people see, perceive and  
854 eat food. These are the new dimension that are added to existing literature on  
855 acculturation, food acculturation and behavioural studies.

856

## 857 **6. Conclusions and future research**

858 To the best of our knowledge this is the first attempt to examine the role of  
859 social media in acculturation of sustainable consumption behaviour. This study places  
860 emphasis on the role of social media as a key acculturation agent, which influences  
861 acculturation in a positive way. It is evident from the findings that by offering a  
862 platform for information diffusion, social media immensely facilitates sustainable  
863 behavioural change among online users. The results demonstrate the absence of  
864 adaptation stress to be a powerful differentiator for acculturation in social media  
865 compared to the traditional acculturation. The study also finds that acculturation in  
866 social media follows the ‘internal pull’ process where users use their own prerogatives  
867 to choose adaptation to a new culture without the pressure imposed by the dominant  
868 group or society in contrast to ‘external push’ experienced during traditional  
869 acculturation. The findings revealed that respondents primarily exhumed ‘integration’  
870 during the remote acculturation in social media. British Indians showed more  
871 integration than the other two ethnic groups in terms of food habits and consumption  
872 behaviour.

873 Our research findings suggest that social media acts like an agent of ‘enabler’  
874 and not an ‘imposer’ within the process of acculturation. Our findings also demonstrate  
875 that social media diminishes the stress of language barrier during acculturation and

876 influences users towards ‘integration’ instead of ‘separation’. While we anticipate that  
877 further advancement in technologies would make social media a harbinger of remote  
878 acculturation through information cascades and diffusion of innovations, further  
879 research is necessary to validate this argument. Regarding sustainable consumption, our  
880 findings establish clear linkage of social media to remote acculturation of sustainable  
881 food consumption behaviour. However, more research is required to substantiate how  
882 interventions in information diffusion can form a basis for encouraging the  
883 acculturation of sustainable behaviour among the food consumers. Such research will  
884 help in expanding the theories of remote acculturation and further help in understanding  
885 the key drivers of behavioural change through technology and social media platform.

886         Although, the scope of analysis in this study is limited to experience and  
887 perception of respondents, we would argue that it is a vital step towards initiating an  
888 integrated research combining important issues such as acculturation and sustainable  
889 consumption behaviour, and linking it to information diffusion on social media. Future  
890 research could focus on studying more on how information diffusion could be modelled  
891 to control and predict the spread of information to influence remote acculturation in  
892 social media – with a focus on sustainable consumption of food so as to meet the goals  
893 of food security. Finally, this research could be useful for social media and  
894 sustainability strategists attempting to inculcate behavioural changes among the food  
895 consumers.

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1161 **Appendix 1**

1162

1163 ***Interview questions – acculturation to sustainable consumption behaviour in the***  
1164 ***social media.***

1165 1. Demographics – gender, age, nationality, education and residency

1166 ***Theme 1: Social Media impact / influence on acculturation***

1167 2. How long have you been using social media and how much time you spend  
1168 being on social media? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

1169 3. What do you use social media primarily for and what are your preferred social  
1170 media platforms?

1171 4. What type of content you view on social media and how do you come across  
1172 such content?

1173 5. Do you have any contacts/friends from other countries or cultures?

1174 6. How do you learn about their (or other) culture, food and customs? Does social  
1175 media has any role in this?

1176 7. What drives / discourage you to learn more about different cultures, food and  
1177 customs?

1178 8. Do you often go dining at international restaurants/cuisines?

1179 9. Do you think abundance information on social media helps you get closer to  
1180 other cultures, food habits and customs? (If no, then why; If yes, then how)?

1181 10. Have you considered adapting to food habits, clothing or languages, which are  
1182 other of yours? (If no, then why; If yes, then how)? How do social media  
1183 influence your cultural practices and does it enhance your flexibility to embrace  
1184 elements of other cultures? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

1185

1186 ***Theme 2: Social Media impact / influence on food acculturation***

1187 11. How do you learn the way you purchase, cook, preserve and consume food  
1188 items and how do social media play a role in it?

1189 12. What information about food on social media interests you? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> (Depending upon  
1190 the answer, follow up questions from Q13-18

1191 13. What role social media play in making your food choices?

1192 14. How often do you cook food at home?

1193 15. Do you love cooking new cuisines?

1194 16. Where do you get new recipes and food ideas?

1195 17. Does social media help you to learn about cuisines from other countries and  
1196 cultures? [1]  
[SEP]

1197

1198 ***Theme 3: Information diffusion and acculturation to sustainable food consumption***

1199 18. Has the way you eat changed since you started browsing social media to fetch  
1200 more information about different types of food habits and cuisines? [1]  
[SEP]

1201 19. What type of information on social media do you think has most influenced the  
1202 change in the way you consume food?

1203 20. What is your opinion about food waste?

1204 21. Does social media render any information on how to stop food waste? (If yes,  
1205 how?)

1206 22. What is your idea about sustainable food consumption and does any content you  
1207 view on social media shared by your international friends or practices in  
1208 different countries influence your perceptions? If yes, how?

1209 23. Have any of those shared information ever changed your outlook towards food  
1210 waste and your own practices of food consumption or usage?

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