



A Study of Culinary Business Marketing Strategies Using Influencers Amidst Weakening Consumer Purchasing Power

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ABSTRACT

The culinary business economy operates within a highly complex environment where operational efficiency meets constantly evolving consumer psychology. A closer look reveals that the sector's economic foundation lies in managing production costs, which are highly sensitive to changes in fiscal policy and volatility in upstream food commodity prices. The purpose of this study is to provide a study of culinary business marketing strategies using influencers amidst weakening consumer purchasing power. This research uses a qualitative approach in the form of a strategic study. This study is supported by secondary data such as books, journals, and related sources. The results of this study indicate that marketing strategies using influencers amidst weakening consumer purchasing power require a paradigm shift from simply creating desire to justifying spending on culinary businesses. Today's consumers are more selective and tend to seek real value rather than mere visual trends. The study of culinary marketing strategies using influencers in challenging economic conditions includes a shift in selection, content emphasis, strong call-to-action promotional strategies, utilization of short video platforms, and rigorous measurement of return on investment.

INTRODUCTION

The culinary business economy is a highly dynamic ecosystem driven by basic human needs that have now shifted to become part of lifestyle and social identity. At a macro level, this sector serves as the backbone of national economic growth through massive employment absorption and significant contributions to gross domestic product (Mariani et al., 2023; Tambunan et al., 2024). Success in this industry depends not only on the quality of food taste but also on efficient supply chain management and the ability to adapt to fluctuations in raw material prices in the global market. Business owners must be astute in managing profit margins amid increasingly fierce competition, where operational costs such as rent, employee wages, and utilities continue to rise annually. Furthermore, digitalization has drastically changed the culinary economy through the emergence of online delivery platforms, expanding market reach while simultaneously demanding high commission efficiency. Marketing strategies based on the power of visual content and consumer reviews on social media are now key determinants in building strong brand equity. In the long term, the sustainability of culinary businesses is heavily influenced by product innovations relevant to health trends and environmental awareness, making energy efficiency and reducing food waste crucial for maintaining profitability and a positive image among customers (Pandiangan et al., 2024; Tambunan et al., 2025). Investment in integrated cashier system technology and consumer behavior data analysis are also key for entrepreneurs to more accurately forecast demand to avoid losses due to excess stock or shortages during peak hours. All of these dynamics create an industry that promises fast-paced revenue growth but demands mental resilience and high financial intelligence for anyone hoping to survive the competitive landscape.

The culinary business economy operates within a highly complex environment where operational efficiency meets constantly evolving consumer psychology. A closer look reveals that the sector's economic foundation lies in managing production costs, which are highly sensitive to changes in fiscal policy and volatility in upstream food commodity prices. Climate uncertainty affecting harvest yields or changes in import regulations for certain raw materials can directly impact profit margins if businesses lack a solid supplier diversification strategy. Furthermore, the capital structure of the culinary business demands rapid cash flow turnover due to the perishable nature of its products, making inventory management based on the principle of first-in, first-out essential to prevent financial losses from raw material waste. This shift in economic behavior is also evident in how the value of a dish is no longer solely determined by the cost of ingredients and labor, but rather by the experience it offers customers. In the modern economy, the aesthetics of a space and the narrative behind a menu have the power to drive prices well above the intrinsic value of the ingredients. This creates a broad market segmentation, ranging from the people's economy, which relies on high sales volumes with thin margins, to the premium culinary sector, which relies on exclusivity and brand loyalty. The ability to balance competitive pricing and consistent quality is a major challenge, especially when people's purchasing power is fluctuating due to uncertain inflation. Digital

transformation has also forced a restructuring of the culinary economic model through sharing economy schemes and third-party logistics services. While digital platforms open the door to broad marketing without rigid geographical boundaries, entrepreneurs now have to contend with new cost structures such as commission deductions and digital promotion costs that significantly drain gross revenue. Therefore, data has become a new economic asset in this industry, where analysis of customer order history is used to create personalized and targeted promotional strategies.

A culinary business marketing strategy through collaboration with influencers requires a comprehensive and measured approach, from content curation to execution, to authentically convey the brand message to the right audience. The most crucial initial step is to identify content creators whose values align with the character of the menu offered. A culinary entrepreneur should not focus solely on a large number of followers but should prioritize the level of audience engagement and the credibility of the influencer in providing food reviews. After finding a suitable partner, the collaboration must be built on transparency and flexible creativity so that influencers can present their products in their own unique style, which is typically more acceptable to the public than rigid, conventional advertising (Pandiangan et al., 2025). Utilizing appetizing visuals through macro photography or cinematic video techniques is highly effective in triggering psychological hunger in potential customers browsing their social media feeds. Furthermore, integrating special promo codes or direct order links within the content serves as a bridge, facilitating the conversion from mere visual interest into actual transactions. The success of this strategy also depends heavily on timely uploads, aligned with audience mealtimes or leisure time, and consistent monitoring of feedback in the comments section to foster two-way interaction (Handika and Darma, 2018). By combining behind-the-scenes stories about dish preparation and honest testimonials from influencers, culinary businesses can organically build public trust, ultimately leading to a significant increase in both traffic to physical outlets and orders via digital platforms.

The depth of a culinary marketing strategy through influencer services lies in the business owner's ability to integrate the product narrative into a trending digital lifestyle without compromising the authenticity of the taste. This stage begins with an in-depth analysis of the influencer's follower demographics to ensure that information about the dish reaches potential consumers who have the purchasing power and taste preferences that align with the target market segment. Effective collaboration goes beyond simply displaying photos of food on the table. It also involves a powerful storytelling process about the origins of raw ingredients, unique cooking techniques, and the dining atmosphere that can evoke specific emotions in the audience. Consumer psychology plays a significant role here, where honest testimonials that demonstrate spontaneous reactions upon tasting food are far more influential in generating purchasing intentions than overly structured advertising copy (Ratih et al., 2020). Culinary entrepreneurs must also be able to synergize campaign momentum with stock availability and operational readiness in the field, so that the surge in demand

generated by viral content does not result in customer disappointment due to poor service or out-of-stock products. Furthermore, the use of post-campaign analytics data is key to understanding consumer behavior, whether they simply like the post or actually take action, such as visiting the business profile or making a reservation. By establishing long-term relationships with influencers of high integrity, a culinary brand can build a loyal community and gradually reduce reliance on temporary paid advertising, creating a sustainable promotional cycle driven by trust and word-of-mouth recommendations in the highly competitive digital space.

Weakening consumer purchasing power is a complex economic phenomenon that occurs when people's financial ability to acquire goods and services experiences a significant, systematic decline. This condition is usually triggered by a combination of uncontrolled inflation and stagnant or even declining income growth, creating a gap between market prices and people's wallets. When prices of basic necessities such as food, energy, and housing soar without commensurate wage adjustments, consumers are forced to strictly reallocate their budgets, prioritizing basic needs and sacrificing secondary and tertiary goods. The impact of this pressure is not only felt at the household level but also spreads to the industrial sector, as the decline in market demand causes inventory to pile up and reduces company turnover, which can ultimately trigger labor efficiency or layoffs. In addition to inflation, fiscal policies such as increases in value-added tax and high interest rates also exacerbate the situation by increasing borrowing costs, thus stifling public interest in making large purchases through credit schemes. At the macro level, if this weakening persists over a prolonged period, national economic growth will slow, given that household consumption is often the primary driver of gross domestic product. The uncertainty of the global economic situation and changes in the structure of the labor market in the digital era also add layers of vulnerability to the purchasing power of people who are struggling to maintain their standard of living amidst the onslaught of increasingly inevitable increases in the cost of living.

The purpose of this study is to provide a study of culinary business marketing strategies using influencers amidst weakening consumer purchasing power.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach in the form of a strategic study. A qualitative approach in the form of a strategy study is an in-depth analytical framework that focuses on a holistic understanding of organizational phenomena and the dynamics of the competitive environment that cannot be measured simply with numbers (Kurdhi et al., 2023). In practice, this approach relies on the researcher's ability to explore the meaning behind strategic actions, corporate culture, and stakeholder perceptions through intensive data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews or participant observation (Pandiangan, 2023). Qualitative strategy studies allow for the identification of contextual variables often overlooked in quantitative models, allowing researchers to map

how decision-making occurs at the managerial level and how the company's vision is internalized by all elements of the organization. The main strength of this method lies in the flexibility of its adaptive research design, where theory often emerges from field data through a systematic, inductive process. By emphasizing the quality of relationships and strategic narratives, this study is able to provide sharper and more relevant recommendations to the unique realities faced by a business entity in the face of constantly changing market uncertainty. Through narrative analysis or comprehensive case studies, the qualitative approach transforms into a crucial intellectual navigation tool for dissecting sustainable competitive advantages rooted in intangible assets and human capital.

This study is supported by secondary data such as books, journals, and related sources. This study was comprehensively compiled, relying on secondary data sourced from highly credible scientific literature with strong relevance to the topic (Rosyidah and Fijra, 2021). The use of various references, such as in-depth textbooks, national and international research journals, and other official documents, aims to build a solid theoretical foundation and provide empirical validation for the arguments put forward in this paper. Through a literature review approach, each piece of information presented has undergone a careful synthesis process to ensure that the perspectives taken are not merely subjective but are supported by the findings of recognized experts in their respective fields (Kusumastuti and Khoiron, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Development of the Culinary Business

The development of the culinary business has undergone an extraordinarily rapid transformation over time in line with shifts in people's lifestyles and massive technological advances. Initially, this industry focused solely on meeting basic human needs for food with a conventional on-site service model, but it has now evolved into a highly complex and dynamic ecosystem. The advent of the digital era has brought fundamental changes through online delivery platforms, allowing businesses to reach consumers without the need for a luxurious or strategic location in the city center (Ratih et al., 2020). The phenomenon of satellite kitchens, or ghost kitchens, is clear evidence of how operational efficiency is now prioritized over the aesthetics of a physical building to reduce capital costs and accelerate distribution reach.

Beyond technological factors, psychological aspects and social values also play a crucial role in the evolution of this business, as food is no longer simply a commodity but has become part of a digital identity and lifestyle. Today's consumers tend to seek unique experiences to share on social media, making the aesthetics of presentation and unique concepts as important selling points as the taste itself. Furthermore, global awareness of health and environmental sustainability has also driven the trend of healthy, plant-based foods and the use of eco-friendly packaging, which are now becoming new standards in the industry. Culinary entrepreneurs are required to continuously innovate and

adapt to rapidly changing market tastes to remain relevant amidst increasingly fierce and limitless global competition (Widowati et al., 2022).

The development of the culinary business in the modern era has evolved into a capital- and technology-intensive industry that integrates consumer psychology with high-level logistical efficiency. This transformation is rooted in shifts in societal behavior, which now views eating not merely as a means of fulfilling biological needs but as a form of self-actualization and the consumption of visual content. The integration of social media into marketing strategies has created a new standard where a dish must possess high aesthetic value to organically spark digital interactions. This has prompted businesses to allocate significant resources to thematic interior design and visually provocative food presentations to gain exposure in the highly competitive cyberspace.

This dynamic is further complicated by the advent of artificial intelligence and big data analytics, which are now used to accurately map market preferences based on specific locations and times. The use of algorithms in restaurant management platforms allows business owners to predict demand trends, allowing for the precision management of raw material inventory to reduce food waste. Furthermore, this business model is also undergoing a physical deconstruction through the popularity of culinary-specific co-working spaces, which allow multiple brands to operate under one roof without the need for on-site dining. This phenomenon creates drastic rental cost efficiencies but also demands absolute excellence in taste quality and delivery speed, as customer loyalty now relies heavily on the end-to-end service experience.

In terms of product substance, a paradigm shift toward raw material transparency and sustainability has occurred, fueled by increasing global consumer health literacy (Hardini et al., 2023). Today's culinary businesses sell not only taste but also narratives about the origins of the ingredients used and their environmental impact on the planet. The emergence of various functional food innovations and animal protein substitutes demonstrates the industry's strong responsiveness to global issues such as climate change and animal welfare. Adaptability to cashless payment technology and digital loyalty systems is also a key pillar for maintaining long-term business sustainability. Overall, the culinary industry has grown into a highly complex sector, where success is no longer solely determined by culinary skills in the kitchen but also by the ability to manage data and understand emerging social narratives.

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Marketing strategies using influencers amidst weakening consumer purchasing power require a paradigm shift from simply creating desire to justifying spending on culinary businesses. Today's consumers are more selective and tend to seek real value rather than mere visual trends. The study of culinary marketing strategies using influencers in challenging economic conditions includes:

1.Selection Shifts

In conditions of low purchasing power, trust is more valuable than reach (Handika and Darma, 2018):

a.Cost Efficiency

Micro and nano influencers have more affordable rates, allowing culinary businesses to spread the risk across multiple individuals rather than relying on a single mega influencer.

b.Local Segmentation

Use influencers with a strong following in a specific geographic area around the outlet to drive direct physical visit conversions.

c.Higher Engagement

Small influencers tend to have more personal interactions with their followers, which is crucial for building consumer confidence in spending their money.

2.Content Emphasis

A rational appeal strategy in content emphasis is a marketing communication technique that focuses on logic, facts, and the functional needs of consumers. While under normal economic conditions, culinary marketing often uses emotional appeals such as happiness, social status, or Instagrammable aesthetics, during a weakening purchasing power, the strategy shifts toward rationality as consumers become more calculating before spending money.

3.Strong Call-to-Action Promotional Strategies

Weak purchasing power requires additional incentives to encourage consumers to make transactions:

a.Exclusive Bundling

Ask influencers to promote special packages, such as influencer A's menu package, at a lower price than buying individually.

b.Flash Sales or Limited-Time Offers

Create a sense of urgency so consumers make a decision before the promotion ends.

c.Honest and Educational Reviews

Consumers today are more discerning. Influencers who offer constructive criticism or tips on how to enjoy food economically will be more likely to be heard.

4.Utilization of Short Video Platforms

Short-form video algorithms enable content to go viral without needing millions of followers (Hardini et al., 2023):

a.Storytelling

Focus on narratives about delicious food while still being economical or about affordable hidden gems.

b.ASMR and Visual Texture

Maintain sensory appeal to trigger impulsive desires, while still incorporating competitive pricing information.

5.Rigorous Measurement of Return on Investment

Amidst budget efficiency, every dollar spent on influencers must be measurable:

a.Unique Promo Code

Use a unique code, for example: KULINERHEMAT10, to track how many transactions each influencer generates.

b.Link Tracking

Use trackable links in your bio or stories to track consumer interest in the menu offered.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that marketing strategies using influencers amidst weakening consumer purchasing power require a paradigm shift from simply creating desire to justifying spending on culinary businesses. Today's consumers are more selective and tend to seek real value rather than mere visual trends. The study of culinary marketing strategies using influencers in challenging economic conditions includes a shift in selection, content emphasis, strong call-to-action promotional strategies, utilization of short video platforms, and rigorous measurement of return on investment.

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