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

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ABSTRACT

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

1. Introduction

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

While most of the acculturation theories primarily focus on physical movement of migrants, there is a vacuum of studies that address the emergence of virtual acculturation aided by cross cultural integration over social media and facilitated by increasing information

dissemination. Immigration of people from one country to another, either permanently or temporarily, gradually exposes them to different cultures, food, clothes and customs. While socialisation facilitates learning of nuances of the culture one grows in, acculturation entails the interaction of at least two cultures, aiding the process of adaptation and assimilation of the person to the values and standards of a new culture (Mendoza, 1989; Rudmin, 2003). Physical migration exposes migrants to an obscure process of adaptation to unknown physical, biological (food, health), economic, social, and cultural conditions often creating consequential psychological stress among such migrants (Simons, 1901; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Berry and Sam, 1997; Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen, 2002; Luedicke, 2011). However, with the emergence of Internet and increasing use of social media, migration is no longer a precondition for people to coalesce with people from other lifestyles, food habits, professions, political views, religiosities, ethnicities and ideologies. Social media and Internet platforms can increase exposure of non-migrants to diverse cultures in which they have never lived thus aiding in remote acculturation (Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012). In their study, Ferguson and Bornstein (2012) explain remote

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acculturation as a new form of acculturation that can occur by discontinuous and/or indirect interaction between two historically and geographically separated cultures through emerging mechanisms of globalisation such as social media.

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

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

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

In this paper we undertake semi-structured interviews of twenty-four social media users to understand how information diffusion on social media related to cooking, eating habits, storage, preservation, consumption, new recipes, food technology and recycling facilitates acculturation to sustainable consumption behaviour. We study three groups of respondents – Indians (living in the home country), British Indians (living in the host country for more than 10 years) and white British (natives of Britain) – to understand how the rampant use of social media enables exchange of information related to food and create enough awareness to share and adopt best possible behaviour with a potential to reduce food waste. Our sample for analysis consists of three distinct groups and we assess the manifestations of their acculturation process, which is influenced by information diffusion on social media. It helps us to further explore issues related to sustainable consumption behaviour among the food consumers.

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

2. Literature review

2.1. Ethnic identity and traditional acculturation

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

Redfield et al. (1936) originally defined acculturation as "*those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups*" (p. 149). Similarly, Berry (2005) defines acculturation as "*the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members*" (p. 698). The above definitions comprehend that acculturation emerges when one experiences cross-cultural *contact* due to physical migration from one geographical location to another, and we refer to this as traditional acculturation in the context of our research. However, in a highly globalised world, we cannot restrict "*contact*" to primarily physical contact, for instance, contact can also be made through social media platforms.

2.1.1. Acculturation outcomes and strategies

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

Research on such different acculturation outcomes is predominantly seen in the area of consumer research, where existing studies have looked at how consumption of specific items, such as food (Cappellini and Yen, 2013; Laroche et al., 2005), media and clothing (Lee and Tse, 1994), demonstrate immigrants' relations with their ethnic and host culture (Rossiter and Chan, 1998). There is still an on-going debate in the literature regarding whether or not consumers or immigrants adapt to the host culture. Many of them suggest that generally the immigrants select and adopt aspects from both cultures, resulting in an integrated acculturation outcome (Askegaard et al., 2005; Oswald, 1999; Penaloza, 1994a). An exception is the study by Ustuner and Holt (2007), which demonstrates outcomes of acculturation as either

separation, where immigrants continue to maintain their original identity through everyday consumption practices and they pursue the dominant culture through mainstream market opportunities, or *marginalisation*, where they "give up on both pursuits, resulting in a shattered identity project." However, these acculturation outcomes could differ based on different ethnic groups, their age, gender, profession and mode of contact with the host. Very few studies have studied the influence of such factors on acculturation process, focusing mostly on minorities after migration.

2.1.2. Factors influencing acculturation outcome

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

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

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

2.1.3. Remote acculturation vs. conventional acculturation

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

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

goods and culture closer between different countries and cultures, the subject still remains understudied mainly due to its vast influence as well as correlation with rampant growth of social media technologies.

2.2. Acculturation and food consumption

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

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

2.2.1. Sustainable food consumption

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

In the context of sustainable food consumption, consumption of organic food or local food can fall under this category as they use less resources during production phase, e.g. no artificial fertiliser or

pesticide input in organic production system, less food miles in local food consumption and at the same time such food are more nutritious and healthy (Lucia et al., 2017). Focus of sustainable food consumption also extends beyond production types and covers reduction in food waste (Evans et al., 2017). Most of the previous research has predominantly focused on individual consumers attitude, behaviour or choice (Hughner et al., 2007; Jackson, 2005). Effect of culture, context, technology and available infrastructure in a given society that influences consumers' choices has not been extensively covered.

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

2.3. Acculturation and information diffusion on social media

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

Online social networks now have become a platform where hundreds of millions of Internet users create, distribute and consume user-generated content. While social media has increased the accessibility to infinite source of information in an unparalleled scale, it plays a vital role in the process of information diffusion by enhancing the exchange of information and diverse perspectives (Geetika et al., 2014). As stated by many previous studies, there seems to be a correlation between node characteristic and the information diffusion in terms of velocity of the message and magnitude of spread – for an example information shared by highly active users of social networks gets viral quickly than inactive or less active users (Henry et al., 2017; Yang and Counts, 2010). Ascertaining the most influential information disseminators in

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

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

2.4. Key research gaps and research questions

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

RQ1: In what ways social media influence acculturation?

RQ2: How does social media influence food acculturation?

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

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

3. Research methodology

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

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

3.1. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the respondents as they provide an appropriate method to gain authentic

information about their social media experiences (Scott and Morrison, 2007). It provides the flexibility to investigate some of the questions in detail as well as skip or omit questions where appropriate, but generally follows a pre-determined list of questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, such interview format offers the respondents a sense of informality due to a conversational tone (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Limitations such as researcher's biasness as well as participants' reluctance to be completely honest to a stranger (Salkind, 2006) were addressed through opportunities created by the interviewers for capturing extemporaneous conversation, covering themes that were considered important to concerned respondents (Mason, 2002).

Mixed purposeful sampling technique was used to interview participants who were social media users geographically resident in India and United Kingdom. This technique was selected because it combines two or more sampling strategies for deriving evidences to achieve the objectives of the study by facilitating triangulation and flexibility in meeting the needs of different stakeholders (Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011). In this case it involved maximum variation sampling and random sampling to increase the credibility of the results. Following the study by Brewer (2000), ethical standards were maintained, and all respondents were explained that their involvement was purely voluntary. Information sheet was provided to all the participants well before the interview process and an informed consent was obtained before the interview.

3.1.1. Interview protocol

Twenty-four respondents were interviewed based on the demographics, heterogeneity and amount of exposure to social media. They comprised of eight from each group of: (1) Indians (living in the home country); (2) British Indians (living in the host country for more than 10 years); and (3) white British (natives of Britain). White British were selected because they constitute 82% of the UK total population according to census 2011. British Indians with a length of more than 10 years stay in the United Kingdom was considered because many previous studies (Kuo and Roysircar, 2004; Fosset, 2006; Besevegis and Pavlopoulos, 2008) have positively associated acculturation with length of stay in the host countries. The study by Kuo and Roysircar (2004) found that migrants who had stayed longer in a host country had more acculturation advantages. Although, none of the previous studies researched acculturation in the context of food consumption behaviour and social media usage, some of them have associated positivity towards the host culture with the length of stay in a foreign culture (Cortes, Rogler and Malgady, 1994). Similarly, Ward and Kennedy (1994) and Liebkind (2001) reason that any sociocultural integration is largely influenced by one of the factors such as length of stay in that culture. Moreover, a study by Miglietta and Tartaglia (2008) found that length of stay is one of the factors that might be needed for acquisition of cultural acquaintance, which in turn, may be increased by the consumption of mass media. Furthermore, a study to understand correlation between the length of stay and cultural integration among migrants in Greece revealed that the percentage of cultural integration increased over the duration of stay (from 31% for 1–5 years of stay to 52% for more than 10 years of stay).

The respondents were interviewed both face to face as well as using web as a platform based on their preferences and geographical locations. Initially, participants were interviewed once. However, based on the transcripts, follow up interviews were also conducted. Face to face interviews were conducted within ideal surroundings, where respondents were made comfortable, as comfort of interviewee is considered an important constituent of a successful interview (Mason, 2002). Interviews focussed on four key themes, which were: (1) social media's influence acculturation; (2) social media's influence on food acculturation; (3) drivers and barriers to food acculturation on social media; (4) and how/whether information diffusion on social media aids acculturation to sustainable food consumption behaviour? Interview themes were also explained to the participants in the context of the

study being interested in understanding the experience, drivers, barriers, and synergies of an individual in order to study their experience of a new food culture and to what extend social media plays a role in it (see Appendix 1). Each of the interviews lasted approximately 60–90 min with an aim to collect views and experience of the participants around social media usage and its influence on food acculturation.

3.1.2. Demographic details of interviewees

Culture is considered to have the most reflective influence on consumer behaviour (Askegaard et al., 2005; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Therefore, three groups of participants were selected that represented cultural diversities. Selecting the three groups of participants i.e. Indians (living in the home country), British Indians (living in the host country for more than 10 years), and white British (natives of Britain), was aimed at understanding how individuals and groups integrate and/or switch between multiple cultural narratives without physically travelling or having face-to-face interactions too often. To avoid gender bias participants consisted of 12 females and 12 males with the youngest one at 21 years and the oldest at 66. They are mostly from cities with facilities of broadband or mobile broadband connections. There were 10 participants in the age group of 21–30, five in the age group of 31–40, two in the age group of 41–50, three in the age group of 51–60, and four in the age group of 61–69 (see Table 1). Their length of experience in social media usage ranged from one year to 9 years, whereas educational qualifications ranged from undergraduate to doctoral degrees.

3.2. Data analysis

The data collected from the participants were analysed using a template analysis, which features coding that evolves throughout the analysis, helping identify any emerging thematic relationships (King, 2004). The study employed the process of hybrid coding (both pre-set and open) in NVivo software. A deductive approach was followed in the prior development of themes, which allowed the researchers to derive a list of pre-set codes from the literature review, before beginning the data collection process (King, 2004). As the analysis of transcripts progressed, an inductive approach of open coding was followed to conceptualise, compare, and categorise data by using a repetitive

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

process to define and examine relations among different categories in the dataset (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Such approach allowed the researchers to revise templates, modify or eliminate codes whether necessary and allowed new themes to emerge. The engagement with respondents was emphasised from initial contact to facilitate their preparedness to reveal and share their perceptions and experiences regarding various aspects of the research. Then the study involved building a consensus to review, revise, and finalise categories to define overarching themes.

4. Analysis

4.1. Traditional acculturation vs. acculturation in social media

Following Berry (2008), we consider acculturation as a multifaceted process that may not always lead to assimilation of the host culture, and definitely not a linear process leading to a melting pot (Penaloza, 1994b). It states that the process of acculturation can possibly lead to various outcomes such as assimilation (when immigrants adopt host culture and leave their original culture), integration (adopt both new and original cultures), separation (withdraw from the host culture and continue with their original culture) and marginalisation (when they withdraw from both the cultures). However, analysing the data based on the semi-structured interviews reflect that the trait of marginalisation was missing from the acculturation on social media, owing to the nature of acculturation that perceived to be purely voluntary. While traditional acculturation theories reflected 'external push' (Hartwell et al., 2011) among the immigrants, majority of participants in this study demonstrated 'internal pull', which also means that social media facilitates the exchange of information without compelling any online users to acculturate. Most importantly, respondents did not show any sign of stress or negative emotions as compared to immigrants as stated in previous studies (Croucher, 2008; Kramer, 2003). Three key themes that emerged out of our analysis are explained below. The results of this study reveal that respondents often acted rational as well as opportunists without the sense of any obligation to conveniently choose cultural attributes that suited their expectations and living standards within a multicultural ambience. The majority of the respondents mainly exhibited the sign of 'integration' (Berry, 2008) to keep the amalgamation of both the ancestral and the host culture. Furthermore, their interaction in the multicultural environment was not driven by influences, but rather by expectations defined by a given context.

4.2. Influence of social media on acculturation

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

> "*I am unable to travel to explore new countries and meet with people to learn new cultures, new food, and new customs. Therefore, I have become a member of many intercultural groups on social media where I learn all things without requiring travelling. 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. For example, we are not forced to eat different food or wear different clothes and the prerogatives of having or not falls on us*".

> (*Respondent IN4*)

Irrespective of the ethnic background, respondents between 21 and 40 years of age appeared to be more likely to adapt new cultures and

customs whereas their counterparts above 55 years of age showed reluctance to embrace new cultures, customs and food. While most of the respondents agreed that social media plays an important role in helping them to learn and adapt new cultures, three of them did not agree with the former, and two were unsure and had neutral opinion about acculturation in social media. Most of the female respondents showed more flexibility towards adapting to new cultures and traditions compared to their male counterparts.

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

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

> (*Respondent BI5*)

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

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

> (*Respondent BR8*)

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

4.3. Influence of social media acculturation on food consumption

Respondents from different ethnic groups showed many similarities as well as differences in perception or opinion regarding the influence of social media on their acculturation to food and sustainable consumption. The Indians preferred social media to social interaction and cited that abundance of information on social media gives them

freedom and time to like and consume the food of their choice. Whereas British Indians and White British respondents preferred social interaction marginally to social media usage to get influenced by food from other cultures – however, agreeing that social media is changing the way they perceived it earlier.

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

"*I really wanted to try lasagne after seeing my friend's Facebook post. It looked yummy. Unfortunately, I could not have it outside because in our culture we don't eat beef. So, I browsed recipes on YouTube and customised my own recipe by replacing beef with paneer and chicken, which came out really delicious. I became popular among my friends for my fusion recipe of lasagne and many of my friends now follow it*".

(*Respondent BI2*)

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

(*Respondent BI16*)

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

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

(*Respondent BR7*)

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

In terms of preferences for social media platforms White British respondents were more influenced by food blogs and dedicated websites, whereas Indians cited Facebook as main source of influence, and British Indians preferred YouTube to other platforms for the information shared. While no concluding evidence were found why different groups preferred a specific social media platform, our analyses points towards certain parameters that could be establishing correlation among the usage patterns. According to the Global Digital Report by ComScore (2018), Indians users of Facebook spend on an average approximately 13% more time on Facebook than their White British counterparts. While Indian social media users demonstrated clear preference to browsing food related content on smart devices, their White British counterparts had no clear preference for the same. It is worth

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

mentioning that Indian respondents had an average of 560 contacts on their Facebook account whereas White British respondents had approximately 325 Facebook contacts. Furthermore, Indian respondents had more numbers of intercultural contacts or friends and spent almost double the amount of time on Facebook compared to White British respondents. It could easily point at our previous assessment that intercultural interactions outside the purview of migration open avenues for remote acculturation (Jensen et al., 2011). This further supports our identification of having multicultural social contacts a driver (Table 2) for remote acculturation. The White British respondents showed clear preference for browsing specific information over the content shared by their network or friends – which in turn points towards the salient features of food blogs and dedicated websites. British Indians' preference for YouTube over Facebook can be linked to the outcome of the UK Social Media Demographic Study 2016 (Weareflint, 2016), which reveals YouTube (at 85%) as the favourite social media platform for adults browsing web within the United Kingdom compared to Facebook (78%). However, many commonalities were found between all three groups agreeing to social media as a powerful information source that influenced their acculturation to new food habits that included preparation, consumption and preservation.

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

(*Respondent BR6*)

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

(*Respondent BR6*)

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

"*After watching the health benefits of continental cuisines on social media, we tried it once while staying in a hotel and it was completely tasteless…no flavour…no colour at all. After having Indian food for so*

many years it is difficult for us to eat this kind of food."

(*Respondent IN8*)

Participants acknowledged that social media augmented their familiarity with other cultures and food – which has helped them in adapting to new food habits during their overseas travel, and that somehow confirms that the acculturation actually starts well before the immigration with consumption of host culture products (Penaloza, 1994b). However, while travelling they confessed to have searched for the ancestral food as their first point of eating to start with. The analysis also revealed that the first experience of having food of different culture further shapes respondents' flexibility and pace towards food acculturation. Which means a bad experience during the first attempt at a new food decreases the flexibility and pace of their acculturation whereas a good experience does exactly the opposite. YouTube emerged as the most sought after social media platform for searching recipes of food from other cultures. At the same time 10 respondents acknowledged that multimedia content on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram urged them to learn more about new cooking methods and cuisines. Participants revealed that language acted as both driver and barrier in the acculturation process (see Table 2). While language acts as a barrier or stress during the traditional acculturation with immigrants (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), it is a driver of acculturation on social media by offering content in both host and ethnic languages.

4.4. Information diffusion on social media and sustainable behavioural change

All respondents understood the necessity and importance of social networks on the spreading of information through multiple sharing and interactions. From four general types of information diffusion: herd behaviour, information cascades, diffusion of innovation, and epidemics (Zafarani et al., 2014), analysis revealed that the types of content respondents accessed and shared can mainly be attributed to herd behaviour, information cascades and diffusion of innovation. Twenty out of twenty four respondents interviewed said they liked, trusted and approved of the information related to food shared by their friends on social networks (information cascades). Previous studies have also demonstrated the effectiveness of using social influence to promote sustainable behaviour (see references in Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2011). They agreed that abundance of information on social media have influenced their food habits, cooking styles, and outlook towards food in some way or other.

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

(*Respondent BR2*)

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

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

(*Respondent IN6*)

Most of the respondents interviewed said they either regularly browsed or invariably came across content related to food waste and sustainable consumption in the form of videos, photographs, blogs, live videos, stories, and cooking classes. However, more than 90% of the respondents agreed that content shared by their role models such as celebrities, sportspersons, religious leaders, celebrity chefs and global organisations influenced the most. While almost all respondents acknowledged the influence of role models on their behaviour, the age group of 20–35 exhibited strong affiliation to such viral contents. Almost 60% respondents agreed that information or content that go viral mostly carry meaningful information for the community. Moreover, our analysis reveals that social media not only helps in information diffusion but also offers synergistic effects for its users when combined with real-life interactions with people from other cultures and belief systems.

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

(*Respondent BR1*)

It emerged clearly from our analysis that respondents residing in India were more influenced by information pertaining to storage and preservation techniques whereas Indians residing in the UK were more influenced by nutrition, wellness and health benefits to carve out change in their consumption behaviour. Almost all respondents reasoned that social media is the primary source of information that aids

Table 3
Illustrations of acculturation in social media.

Respondents	Residence	Illustrative quote	Acculturation themes
IN4	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
BI2	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
BR6	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
BR1	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
BR5	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

increased awareness related to environmental pollution, sustainability, and food waste, which guides them gradually towards developing sustainable consumption behaviour (see Table 3). One respondent also cited, 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign that focussed primarily on raising awareness about the consequences of food waste by rendering consumers the information and knowledge required in order to change their behaviour, as an example that has largely impacted her behaviour.

> "Earlier, I never had this notion of eating food items after the "best before date". But I was surprised to see one of my Indian housemates eating fruits and veges even after the best before date. When I searched about more information on Google, it took me to the Facebook page of my university where I could learn that we can consume the food as long as it is not spoiled. Now I don't mind eating as long as it looks good to eat".
>
> (*Respondent BR5*)

5. Discussion

The current research investigated the aspects of remote acculturation in the context of its correlation with social media. With vast expansion of the Internet, social media aids the extension of an individual's social network to a scale that was previously unimaginable (Kane et al., 2014). This extension enables social media users to widen their social networks using social media and get connected to new information and ideas that were previously inaccessible (Leonardi, 2014; Richey and Ravishankar, 2017; Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Furthermore, the emergence of social media has presented an opportunity for the indirect and/or discontinuous interaction between cultures in the "globalised, de-territorialized world" to enable remote acculturation, despite the interacting cultural groups being geographically separated (Appadurai, 1991, p. 196; Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012). Although, this research primarily focussed on one parameter of acculturation that is food, it bolstered the validity of remote acculturation through its findings. Locher et al. (2005) also stated that any research on acculturation would be incomplete without involving the element of food consumption, owing to the significance of food to an individual's well-being.

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

5.1. Theoretical implications

The core focus and motivation behind studying these aspects of acculturation is deeply rooted in understanding how acculturation occurs on social media and how influential it is in the absence of direct contacts between intercultural groups. By doing so this study advances the current knowledge in remote acculturation as well as in food

acculturation. With growing online users, the expansion of social contacts does not fall hostage to the boundaries of country, culture, food habits, ideologies or customs. In addition, the availability of information, new ideas, innovations and ideologies are not restricted to social contacts. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, WeChat among others act as harbingers of information dissemination with strong inter-personal influence. As consumers associate with social media users with diverse background they get opportunity to engage others with different mind-sets, experiences, viewpoints and expertise (Kane et al., 2014). These new interfaces of information diffusion, on integrating various sources of information, believed to enhance the opportunities for the unearthing, learning and expansion of new ideas (Dahlander and Piezunka, 2014; Mount and Martinez, 2014). This process unvaryingly influences exchange of new ideas, best practices, cultural eloquences and behavioural traits. It further contributes towards building literature by linking social media acculturation to the information diffusion theory and sustainable consumption behaviour. Notwithstanding the limited scope of this study to select three cultural group for research, this can easily be generalised to cover other intercultural groups, geographical setting and other cardinal issues. We argue that production and consumption of social media content along with exposure to social media platforms are directly proportional to the amount of openness for food acculturation. Additionally, the abundance of information on social media has substantial influence on how people see, perceive and eat food. These are the new dimensions that are added to existing literature on acculturation, food acculturation and behavioural studies.

6. Conclusions and future research

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

Our research findings suggest that social media acts like an agent of 'enabler' and not an 'imposer' within the process of acculturation. Our findings also demonstrate that social media diminishes the stress of language barrier during acculturation and influences users towards 'integration' instead of 'separation'. While we anticipate that further advancement in technologies would make social media a harbinger of remote acculturation through information cascades and diffusion of innovations, further research is necessary to validate this argument. Regarding sustainable consumption, our findings establish clear linkage of social media to remote acculturation of sustainable food consumption behaviour. However, more research is required to substantiate how interventions in information diffusion can form a basis for encouraging the acculturation of sustainable behaviour among the food consumers. Such research will help in expanding the theories of remote acculturation and further help in understanding the key drivers of behavioural change through technology and social media platform.

Although, the scope of analysis in this study is limited to experience and perception of respondents, we would argue that it is a vital step towards initiating an integrated research combining important issues

such as acculturation and sustainable consumption behaviour, and linking it to information diffusion on social media. Future research could focus on studying more on how information diffusion could be modelled to control and predict the spread of information to influence remote acculturation in social media – with a focus on sustainable consumption of food so as to meet the goals of food security. Finally, this research could be useful for social media and sustainability strategists attempting to inculcate behavioural changes among the food consumers.

Appendix 1

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

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

Theme 1: Social Media impact/influence on acculturation

2. How long have you been using social media and how much time you spend being on social media?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10. Have you considered adapting to food habits, clothing or languages, which are other of yours? (If no, then why; If yes, then how)? How do social media influence your cultural practices and does it enhance your flexibility to embrace elements of other cultures?

Theme 2: Social Media impact/influence on food acculturation

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

12. What information about food on social media interests you? (Depending upon the answer, follow up questions from Q13–18

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

14. How often do you cook food at home?

15. Do you love cooking new cuisines?

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

17. Does social media help you to learn about cuisines from other countries and cultures?

Theme 3: Information diffusion and acculturation to sustainable food consumption

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

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

20. What is your opinion about food waste?

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

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

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

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