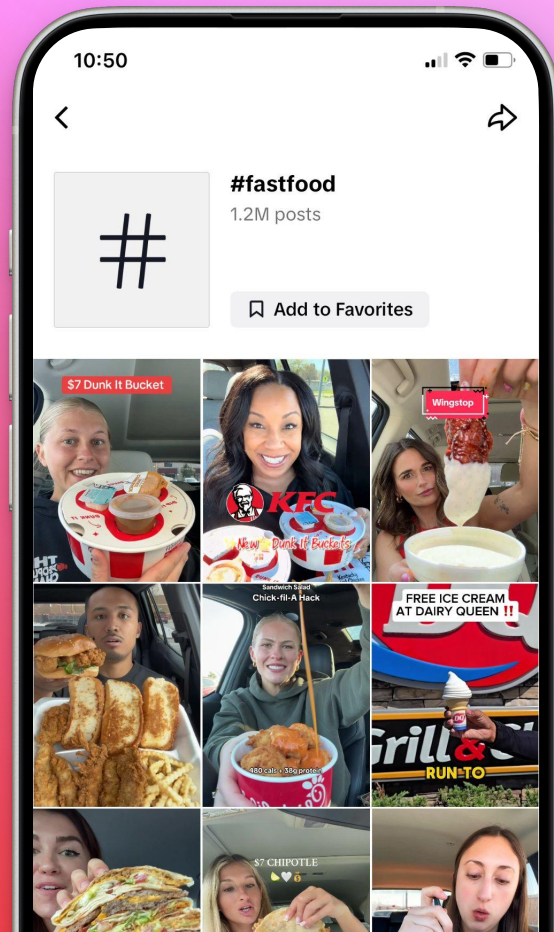


the drop

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THE NEWS MOVEMENT

Industry Trend Report: *Food Hospitality*



About The News Movement

The News Movement was founded to **change the way the news is done.**

Comprised of talent from all corners of journalism, production, tech and the creative industries, **we inform and excite people with factual information.**

This looks like breaking news, investigations, and cultural stories to our followers and fans – **we reach over 100M of them on social media every month through our brands *TNM* and *The Recount*.**

For our clients, this takes the form of **driving business outcomes through social media** – through our channels, through theirs, and through third parties like creators.

Curious to hear more? **Let's talk.** Drop us a line at partnerwithus@thenewsmovement.com

Foreword

Welcome to ***The Drop***, our bi-monthly deep dive into what's trending in different industries on social...

This month: **Food Hospitality**

Some of the terms and concepts outlined in ***The Drop*** may well feel familiar, which is why we have gone a step further to unpack the numbers behind how these trends have emerged to deliver REAL INSIGHT we hope you find useful.

We have also used our own AI products, journalistic approach and creative curiosity to develop brand spotlights which show how businesses in this industry stack up against one another.

We hope you enjoy ***The Drop*** as much as we have enjoyed creating it. We look forward to any thoughts or feedback and hope to hear from you soon.

Overview

- 01. Hot Topics
- 02. Algorithm Hacks
- 03. Trend Watch
- 04. Headline Talent
- 05. Creative Approaches
- 06. Brand Spotlight

Hot *Topics*

Non-alcoholic beverages

Younger generations are embracing non-alcoholic beverages and 'sober curious' lifestyles.

Health and wellness priorities and cultural shifts towards mental and physical well-being have led the way for this trend. Furthermore, the accessibility to non-alcoholic alternatives and the normalisation of alcohol-free lifestyles via social media have made this trend more ubiquitous.

This shift away from alcohol, largely championed by Gen Z, has prompted bars and restaurants to expand their menus to include creative mocktails and low-alcohol options, which is driving footfall.

38%

of Gen Z drinkers purchased more non-alcoholic beverages in 2024 compared to the previous year

34%

of Gen Zers will try a new beverage product if it's marketed to align with a 'sober curious' lifestyle

Source: PR Newswire

Tipflation

“Tipflation” refers to the recent expansion of gratuity to more industries beyond full-service restaurants – particularly in the U.S.

The rise of tipflation can likely be attributed to the pandemic and the inflation surge that began in 2021, as well as the increase of touch-screen digital payment systems that include gratuity prompts.

With tipping fatigue, food hospitality brands could reassess compensation models, communicate when tipping is most appropriate, or adjust digital payment prompts to offer more reasonable tipping suggestions to help combat fatigue and give consumers more insight and agency.

72%

of U.S. adults say tipping is expected in more places today than it was 5 years ago

48%

of Americans say they're tired of being asked to tip

Source: Pew Research (Nov 2023); USA Today/OnePoll (Sept 2024)

Experiential dining

“Experiential dining” refers to dining experiences that go beyond the food – whether that’s multi-sensory dining, themed restaurants, or unusual locations. People are no longer dining out solely for sustenance, and they’re willing to pay for it.

The increased interest in experiential dining can be attributed to the growing influence of social media, where shareable experiences create FOMO and fuel demand.

With an intentional social strategy that showcases the *experience*, food hospitality companies can encourage foot traffic and brand affinity by spotlighting dining experiences unique to their brand, and building a story around them.

72%

of diners
expressed a desire
for more
experiential dining
options

75%

of diners would
pay more for a
unique dining
experience

Source: Entegra (Dec 2023);
Eventbrite

Algorithm **Hacks**

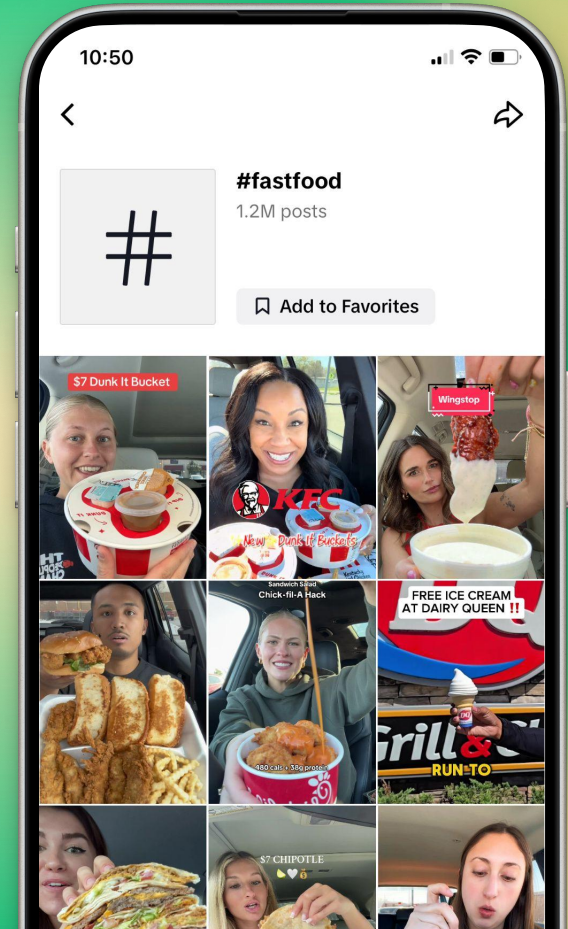
Keywords & Hashtags

Niche and viral hashtags:

#fastfood (1.2M)
 #sobertok (312K)
 #lowcalorie (290K)
 #mocktails (158K)
 #sobercurious (120K)
 #brunchideas (99K)
 #dryjanuary (81K)
 #brunchvibes (28K)
 #drivethruprank (9K)

Trending terms (Q1 2025):

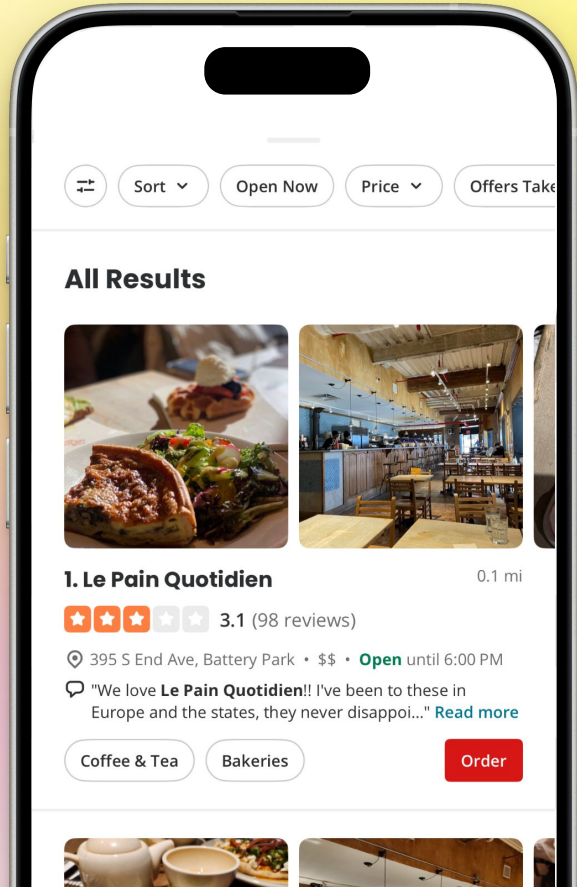
Ghost kitchens
Low-ABV cocktails
QR code menus
Sustainable practices
AI in customer service
Personalised dining experiences



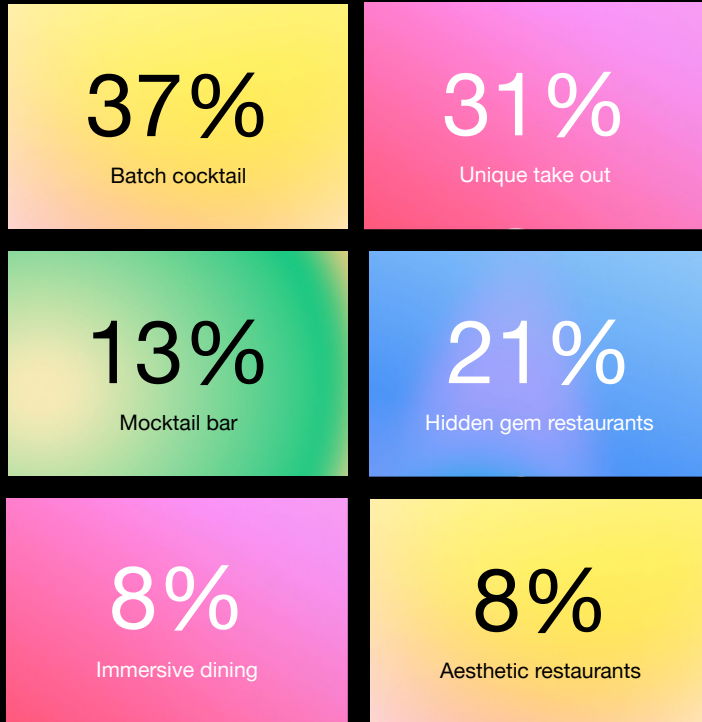
Trend *Watch*

Quick Hits

- 90% of consumers actively research restaurants online before dining
- 72% of consumers specifically use a restaurant's social media to research
- Digital ordering and delivery has grown 300% faster than dine-in traffic since 2014
- A half-star difference on Yelp can swing restaurant business by a *whopping 27%*



Source: Profile Tree (July 2024); Amra & Elma (2024)



Top YoY Keyword Growth

Source: Glimpse

Hyper-growth keywords

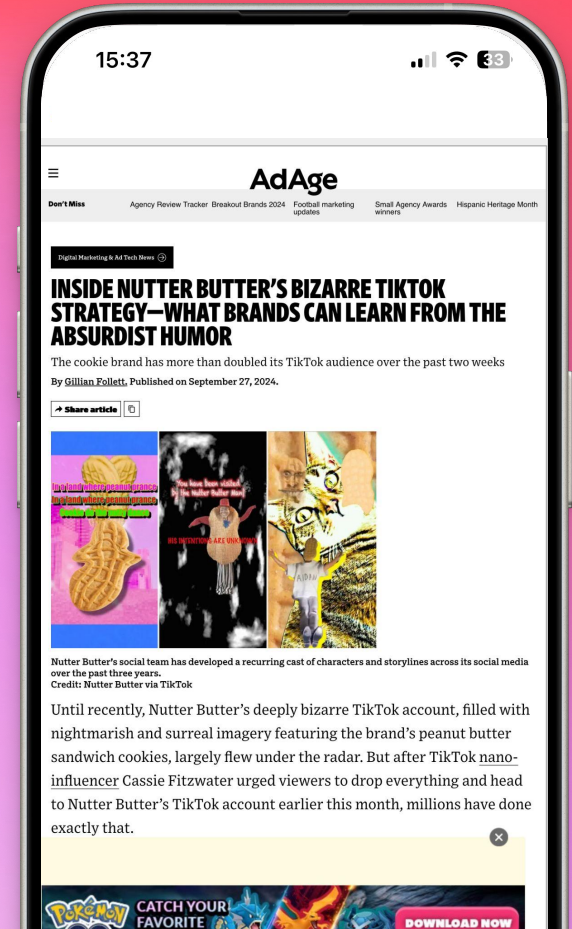
Glimpse analyses keyword growth by tracking the frequency, velocity, and context of mentions across social platforms over time, identifying spikes, sustained increases, and emerging patterns that signal rising trends.

Brain rot social

From *Nutter Butter*'s bizarre TikTok strategy and recent posts from its sibling brand, *Sour Patch Kids*, to *KFC UK*, *Heinz UK* and *Wendy's*, we're seeing more and more brands jump on to the absurdist humor trend – and it's working.

The term “brain rot” grew in usage frequency by 230% between 2023 and 2024, according to Oxford, and searches for “brain rot meaning” have ballooned by over 2,073% over the past year.

This absurdist trend, and the rise of ‘brain rot’ humor, show no signs of slowing down. Audiences are leaning into the chaos, and brands that get it are winning.



Collaboration economy

Collaboration between brands and influencers is nothing new, but there has been a significant increase in cross collaboration between two or more brands. Recent successful collaborations in the food hospitality industry include:

- *Icee & Peeps*
- *Don Julio x Popeyes*
- *Taco Bell x Milk Bar*

71%

of consumers enjoy
co-branding partnerships

\$400 B

Global valuation of the
brand-to-brand collaboration
market in 2023

Source: PR Newswire; Brand
Partnerships

Headline **Talent**

Rising stars

Our top food hospitality creators to watch in 2025:

- [@kayleighleon](#) (478K fans)
- [@bad_birdy](#) (383K fans)
- [@foodbabyny](#) (321K fans)
- [@milehighandhungry](#) (191K fans)
- [@chowdowndetroit](#) (184K fans)
- [@josheatsphilly](#) (182K fans)
- [@thequeenfoodie](#) (98K fans)
- [@gagebriney](#) (82K fans)



Creative *Approaches*



Shocking food content

Sometimes gross, often weird and always over the top, shocking food content has been experiencing breakout success on social media so far this year.

By and large created for entertainment purposes only, the disgust the content creates sparks curiosity and reactions, driving comments, shares and the algorithmic boost that comes with it. That engagement can, in turn, be used to create more content – with comments being turned into humorous static posts and memes. Indeed, with this format it's often the negative attention that propels the content furthest.

Intentionally bizarre formats

Independent British restaurants *Merchants Fish & Chips* and *Street Pizza Llangollen* have picked up where *Wakey Wines* left off, achieving notoriety on TikTok by producing repeatable video formats that aren't just about the food.

Their content thrives on quirky, offbeat, and awkward humor. This type of content often features deadpan delivery & awkward pauses, over-the-top enthusiasm, intentionally bizarre edits, engagement with TikTok trends, and – in the case of *Street Pizza Llangollen* – hilarious covers of popular songs. It's not just about the food, it's about the chaotic energy that keeps people hooked AND drives footfall.





Memes

As marketers respond to the need to “do more with less” this year, and to address next-gen consumer expectations of their brand, we are increasingly seeing brands in this category leveraging memes and participating in cultural conversations on social media.

Memes are a low-cost, high-impact marketing format that can generate more attention than big-budget campaigns and allow brands to connect on a personal level – staying top-of-mind among young consumers, who are active on social media. Expect brands in this category continue to leverage memes about music (Coachella), sports (Wimbledon, US Open) film (Awards Season) and TV to insert themselves into the cultural conversation.

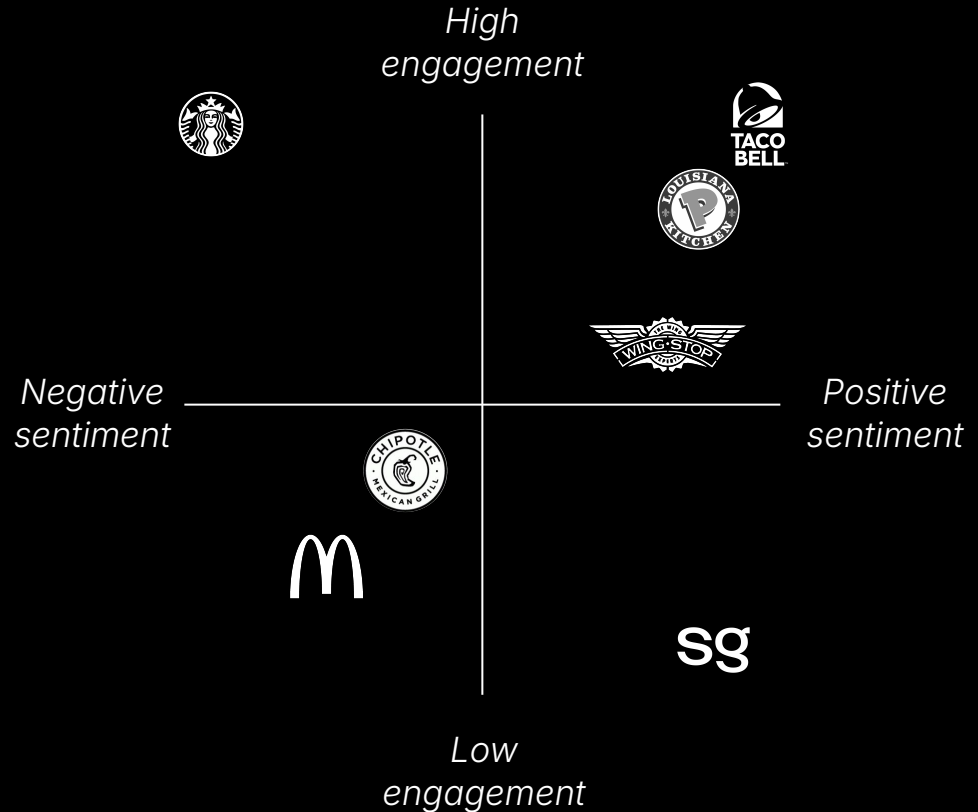
Brand **Spotlight**

Brand Spotlight

Leveraging our proprietary social listening tool, *Top Story Turtle*, we analysed the chatter on social media surrounding some of the world's biggest food hospitality brands.

Is their brand sentiment positive or negative overall? Is the engagement with the brand high or low? See how each chosen brand stacks up.

Want us to analyse your brand's performance?
Get in touch!



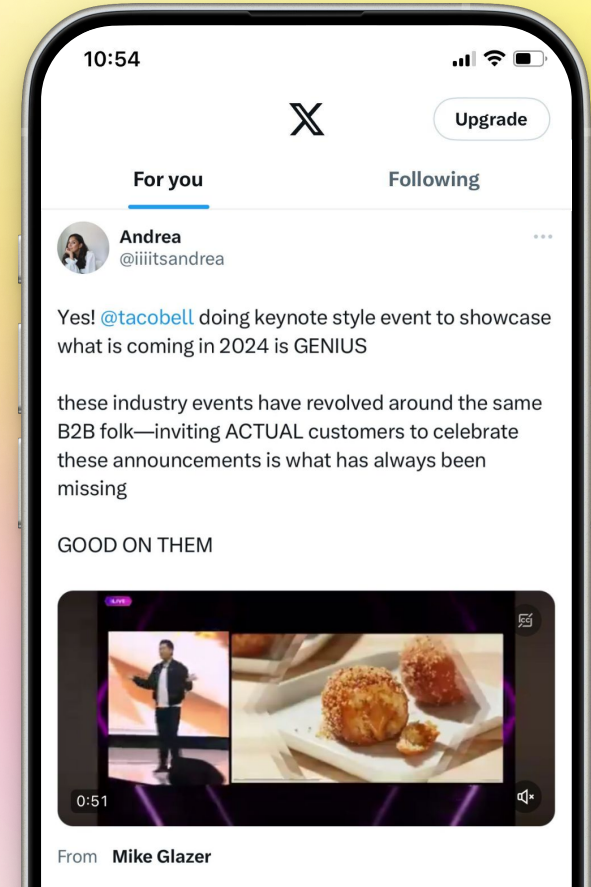
Taco Bell

During *Taco Bell's* “Live Más Live” event in March, the brand unveiled a series of bold initiatives aimed at driving future growth and deepening fan engagement. They introduced 30 new menu items and collaborations with brands like *Siegelman Stable* and *Bad Birdie*.

Taco Bell's strategic use of social media platforms amplified the excitement surrounding these announcements, activating a vibrant community of superfans. The brand's proactive engagement has led to trending conversations focusing on menu innovations, fan appreciation, and exclusive collaborations.

10 of the top 20 most engaging videos (out of 2,224) in the QSR industry (Top 100 QSR accounts) on TikTok in the last 90 days were from *Taco Bell*.

By consistently delivering engaging content and interactive experiences, *Taco Bell* has cultivated a loyal and active online community, setting a benchmark for social media best practices in the food hospitality industry.



Thank You.