

What Makes Food News & Information Credible?

CFI research IDs influencers driving the conversation



THE CENTER FOR
FOOD INTEGRITYSM

Connecting with Consumers in a Post-Truth World

When it comes to food and how it's produced, misinformation abounds. Why do certain ideas – true or not – take root and thrive, while others wither on the vine? Who turns fleeting mentions into outright movements?

It boils down to the influence of certain consumer segments that drive which food news is shared and embraced.

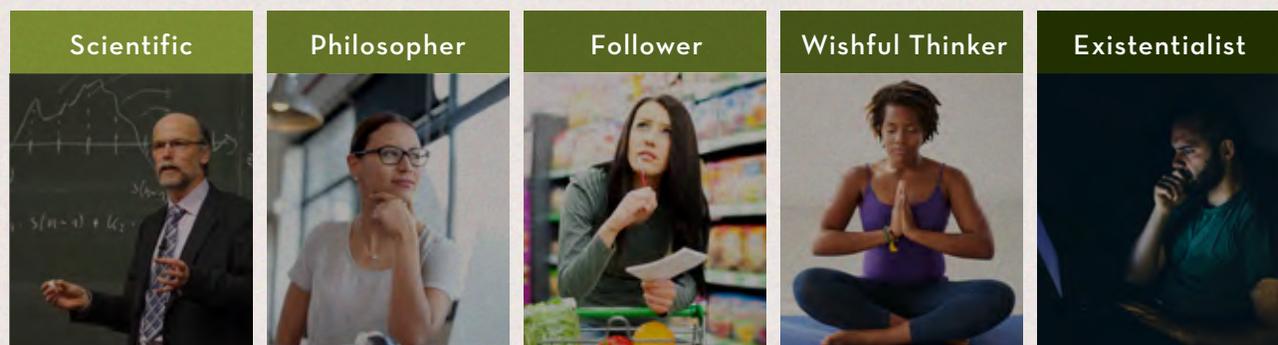
In the first-of-its-kind research, The Center for Food Integrity used an innovative approach called digital ethnography to observe thousands of consumers online across many social channels, tracking their behaviors and identifying beliefs, values, fears and unspoken motivations when it comes to food information and how it moves through culture.

It's akin to following digital breadcrumbs that leave a trail showing what consumers actually do – not just what they say they do. It gives us detailed insights into how – and where – to engage the right audiences to earn trust.

Truth is Relative

The assessment of what makes food information credible for the five identified consumer segments is shaped by their relationship to the truth.

The Truth Spectrum



Objective & grounded in evidence-based science
Nothing more, nothing less

Objective & subjective
Seeks guidance from a trusted authority

Coincides with desires and beliefs
“What feels true.”

When Influencers Talk, Who's Listening?



*Most segments talk amongst themselves. The only exceptions are the Scientific and Philosopher.

Opportunities



The Philosopher makes up only 9% of the population but is **the culture creator** in the context of food news and its credibility, influencing the Follower who values simplified information grounded in ethics.

- Listens to science but also considers sources and funding, and believes science can be biased.
- Applies an ethical lens to data to position themselves on the right side of morality when it comes to people, the planet, animals and more.
- Prefers information from well-established, respected publications and government sources, although not always the U.S. government.



The Follower represents **39% of the population**, the largest segment, and is open to food information from experts they can relate to like the Philosopher who approaches science with ethics.

- Listens to advice from sources they can relate to - credible sources that are "like me."
- Wants simple, easy to understand and unambiguous advice and answers to questions or concerns about food.
- Is looking for assurance they are doing the right thing for themselves and their families.

The Common Denominator

What makes messages resonate is ethics - or the values that drive our beliefs, decisions and opinions. As our CFI trust model shows, it's our shared values that earn trust. In fact, **shared values are 3-to-5 times more important to earning trust than simply sharing information.**

To learn more about digital ethnography segmentation, including behaviors, trusted sources, brand affiliations, top digital channels and how to apply the research to effectively engage, contact CFI at learnmore@foodintegrity.org.