

## "Visual Appetite: The Emergence of Food Pornography and Its Effects on Food Consumption"

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**Abstract:** "Visual Appetite: The Emergence of Food Pornography and Its Influence on Comestible Intake" is a title that delves into the topic of food pornography and its impact on eating habits. The term "food pornography" alludes to the use of artfully stylized, visually pleasing images of food that are fashioned to stimulate the viewer's desire and elicit a craving for the portrayed comestible. The essay scrutinizes how food pornography has surfaced as a cultural trend and how it has affected our connection with food. It elucidates how food pornography gratifies our hunger for gratification and how it invigorates our senses through visual enticement. The images of food are meticulously fashioned to generate an emotional bond with the viewer, inciting an intense desire for the food represented. The piece also examines the repercussions of food pornography on our eating patterns. It argues that the emphasis on indulgence and excess in food pornography can foster a culture of overconsumption, contributing to unhealthy eating habits. Furthermore, it explores how the idealized standards projected in food pornography can result in feelings of shame and guilt around food, ultimately affecting one's body image negatively. Overall, "Visual Appetite: The Emergence of Food Pornography and Its Influence on Comestible Intake" is a title that emphasizes the role of visual stimuli in our association with food and how it has evolved over time, giving rise to food pornography and its impact on our eating habits.

**Key words:** Food pornography, Visual stimuli, Body image, social media, Sensory stimulation.

Visual sociology, which investigates how cultural practises and objects reflect and develop societal norms and values, can be used to understand food pornography. According to Bourdieu (1984), individuals use their cultural choices to communicate their social rank and identity through cultural consumption. People use their understanding and appreciation of food to set themselves apart from others, which is shown in the emergence of food culture and food porn. The research on the role of visual representations and images in society focuses on how they alter how we perceive and absorb our surroundings. When it comes to food porn, the highly stylized and meticulously produced photographs of food that overrun social media feeds and culinary blogs have a significant influence on how we view food. Our expectations about food's appearance, flavour, and even preparation and presentation might be influenced by these images. The creation and consumption of food erotica are not passive or neutral operations, in accordance with visual sociology. On the contrary, it is a dynamic procedure that reflects and reinforces contemporary expectations and beliefs about food, such as the value of presentation,

the appreciation of exotic and expensive products, and the pursuit of pleasure and indulgence. By examining food porn through a visual sociological lens, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic forces that shape our relationship with food. We can also consider how these images and representations may perpetuate inequalities and exclusions within the food system, such as the exclusion of certain cuisines and foodways or the promotion of unsustainable and environmentally harmful practices.

The enticing qualities of food porn can be understood in light of Mulvey's (1975) concept of the gaze. The term "gaze" describes how visual media, including film and photography, place the spectator in the role of a passive observer of the image. By watching food porn, the viewer is positioned in the role of a voyeur staring at a stylized and idealized representation of food. As a result, the spectator feels a sense of longing and want because they are unable to physically eat the meal and must instead rely on the visual representation to quench their cravings. The enticing nature of food porn resides in its capacity to stir up in the viewer a sense of pleasure and desire, similar to the experience of sexual arousal, according to a study published in the *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* (Velten and Koenigstorfer, 2019). Apparently, a part of the explanation for this phenomenon lies in the way food is marketed and commodified in modern culture, which uses pictures of food in marketing not only goods but also identities and new ways of living in an attempt to sell new ways of living and identities.

Food erotica as a marketing strategy can be viewed through the lens of neoliberalism, as defined by Harvey (2005). Neoliberalism places a strong emphasis on the value of personal freedom and the pursuit of pleasure. Industries who want to appeal to customers' desires for pleasant experiences may use food porn to advertise their goods and services, which can be considered as an expression of this perspective on life. Cultural objects, particularly food, possess symbolic meaning in Alexander's (2003) cultural sociology and are utilised to negotiate social relationships and identities. One way to think of food porn is as a cultural construct which demonstrates our relationship with food, our desire to consume for pleasure, and the social and cultural expectations that influence our consumption habits.

The function of social media platforms in facilitating the dissemination of food pornography can also be better understood through the study of media. Jenkins (2006) contends that the growing popularity of participatory culture, in which consumers transform into content producers and suppliers, is the consequence of media convergence. Users can exchange food-related photographs and videos on social media sites, fostering the emergence of a food porn industry.

Consumer culture theory can be used to examine how food porn operates as a marketing strategy. In the words of Arnould and Thompson (2005), consumer culture moulds our identities and consumption habits, and marketing strategies help define consumer demands. It's possible to interpret the use of food porn in marketing as an effort to appeal to our desire for joyful encounters and influence our consumption habits. The consumption of food is influenced by social and cultural standards and has become an important indicator of social status and identity

(Cook & Crang, 1996). The popularity of food porn, which is frequently posted on social media sites like Instagram and Pinterest, has been influenced by the growth of food culture. However, Kilbourne (1999) contends that the media upholds a thin ideal, which fuels eating disorders and discontent with one's body. Particularly for people who deal with body image, the images of food in food porn can evoke comparable sentiments of inadequacy and humiliation regarding food.

Knowledge the controversy around food pornography requires a knowledge of the sociological concept of commodification. As defined by Marx (1867), the process of turning products and services into commodities that are capable of being bought and sold on the market is known as commodityization. This procedure entails giving something that was previously regarded as unrelated to trade a monetary worth. The process by which food is turned from a basic necessity for living into a consumer good that can be marketed and sold for profit is known as objectification.

Critics believe that food pornography contributes to the commercialisation of food by making it into a visual object that is consumed for enjoyment rather than nutrition (McDonald, 2013). The idealised and presented representations of food in food porn are typically created for profit with the intention of marketing specific brands or products. Customers are being encouraged to purchase more than they actually need in order to accomplish the fictitious food images they see in food porn, which can lead to a culture of overconsumption and waste (Allen, 2010). Likewise, the emphasis on aesthetics and aesthetic attractiveness in food pornography may lead to a decrease in customer involvement with the food they consume.

A visual representation known as "food pornography" aims to stimulate and quench both our appetites for food and our need for pleasure. Often containing close-up pictures and vibrant colours that are intended to tantalise our senses, it accomplishes this by employing highly stylised and aesthetically enticing representations of food. Think of a well-known culinary blog, for instance, that posts mouthwatering pictures of fancy pastries. The blog may make use of fine-quality images that highlight the delectable flavours and textures of the sweets, such the creamy filling of a macaron or the flaky crust of a croissant. By doing this, the pictures arouse the viewer's overwhelming desire and craving, luring them to sample the treats for themselves.

Sociologists may research food porn, however this is a relatively new field of study, and few sociologists have expressly concentrated on this problem. However, the following academics have studied and written about media and culinary culture: The author of "Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture" and "The Celebrity Culture Reader" is David L. Marshall. Author Alan Warde of "Consumption, Food, and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture" co-author Sarah Bowen of "Pressure Cooker: Why Home Cooking Won't Solve Our Problems and What We Can Do About It"

Food porn, which typically shows women in highly sexualized ways, frequently features pictures of minimally clad models or actors posing provocatively with food. This is done in an effort to improve social media engagement and likes or to advertise products. However, this method has come under heavy fire for objectifying women and encouraging harmful gender stereotypes (Mulvey, 1975). For instance, images of sexy women clutching burgers or chips are regularly used in commercials for fast food and snack items, confusing the consumption of these foods with arousal and desire. These pictures support the notion that a woman's primary function is to satisfy the desires of males, and that a woman's worth is determined by her propensity for sexual attractiveness and availability.

Food pornography usually uses up-close images of lips or tongues consuming food or showcases curves and body parts to underline the sexual allure of female bodies in stylized and fetishized ways. This is clear from the countless images of food influencers and bloggers using their bodies to promote food products, typically by posing in skimpy clothing while holding or eating food (Freund, 1980).

A complicated issue that reflects broader cultural views on gender and sexuality is how women are portrayed in food pornography. While using sexualized imagery may help draw viewers' attention and engage them, doing so may also encourage unfavourable presumptions and foster a culture of objectification and prejudice.

Overall, food pornography is an effective tool for satisfying our desire for satisfying food and visual pleasure. It does this by employing well-crafted designed and precisely produced graphics meant to engage our senses and arouses strong feelings and desires. Furthermore, the focus on aesthetics in food pornography might lead to culinary uniformity, losing the depth and uniqueness of many food traditions. The emphasis on appearance in food marketing, according to Shove et al. (2012), might result in a disregard for flavour and cultural significance. Particularly in the context of the global food system, food marketing could contribute to the exploitation of workers and resources.

In the digital era, the practise of creating highly styled and sometimes sexualized photographs of food is known as food pornography. The commercialization of food and the degradation of the cultural and moral components of traditional and ethnic cuisine, however, may result from this tendency. This phenomena may be viewed from the viewpoint of cultural studies as a component of a wider system of cultural production and consumption that places a higher priority on aesthetic appeal and business interests than on cultural and nutritional worth. Food pornography may be viewed as a component of a wider cultural production and consumption system that places a higher importance on aesthetic appeal and financial gain than on cultural and nutritional worth.

For example, one aspect of this system is the increase of fast food and processed food items. These goods frequently put convenience and aesthetic appeal over nutritional value by utilising

preservatives and chemicals to improve their flavour and look (Nestle, 2002). The food industries often use visual marketing techniques to persuade consumers to purchase (Schlosser, 2001). This is achieved by using visuals and catchphrases to create a sense of urgency and desire in the minds of the audience. This may be seen in the various advertisements for sugary foods and beverages, which use eye-catching hues and seductive models to equate consumption to pleasure.

Food is an important cultural item that is strongly linked to identity and social practises, according to anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy's book "Consuming Culture: Why You Eat What You Eat" (1997). Food is a sign of social status and cultural identity in addition to providing nutrition. Food loses cultural meaning and ethical worth when it is commodified and reduced to a visual joy. Food pornography may contribute to the extinction of ethnic and traditional culinary cultures. In her book "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals" (2006), journalist Michael Pollan discusses how food industrialisation has resulted in the homogeneity of food cultures and the elimination of traditional and regional food practises. Food loses its connection to its environment.

The widespread use of food photography, frequently referred to as food pornography, has raised concerns about how it may encourage consumerism and an emphasis on appearance over substance. This might lead to a drop in the importance put on eating as a cultural and communal activity, as well as a trend towards shallow, individualistic views towards food. Concerns have been raised about the impact of "food pornography," or the extensive sharing of aesthetically appealing food photographs on social media, on food waste. As companies seek to design increasingly elaborate and eye-catching food displays, people may be enticed to buy or prepare an excessive amount of food that goes unconsumed, creating considerable ecological impacts. Scholars noticed that individuals who viewed images of large portion sizes were more likely to overestimate how much food they should eat, and thus wasted more food, than those who viewed images of smaller portions (Haws et al., 2017). This shows that the visual cues offered by food photography can have a strong influence on people's eating behaviour, contributing to the problem of food waste. likewise, the prevalence of food pornography on social media platforms has been connected to an excess and waste culture. According to one critic, "social media platforms have created a culture of showing off, with food waste being a byproduct of the endless one-upmanship" (Charm, 2021).

Michael Pollan's (2006) famous book "The Omnivore's Dilemma" might be used to support this viewpoint. Pollan examines the ecological, sociological, and cultural components of our modern food system, including the effects of consumerism, industrial agriculture, and food waste, in this study. He eloquently addresses the ways in which modern industrial food is predicated on ignorance, apathy, and delusion, as well as how to link the food we consume with the story of how it arrived at our table. Pollan's book is much more than an exposé of corporate farming; it is

a philosophical and practical meditation on the perils of breaking the food/knowledge nexus and the joys of repairing it.

He adds that the "omnivore's dilemma" is both the opportunity and the challenge that humans confront when determining "what should be on the table for dinner?" In contemporary American society, the problem is particularly pressing. We are particularly susceptible to food fads, marketing tactics, and "expert advice" since we lack culinary traditions and cultural norms around how to eat. The commercial food system, which hides the most vital details about the ecological, moral, and health effects of our diets, is the primary cause of what Pollan refers to as "our national eating disorder."

One of the key features of postmodern culture is the emphasis on the visual, where form and presentation take precedence over substance and meaning. In the case of food porn, the meal's visual appeal is exaggerated to the point that it dominates the scene, frequently to the detriment of the dish's nutritional or cultural importance.

Due to this overemphasis on its visual beauty, food is losing importance as a cultural and social activity. Food is reduced to a basic commodity, regarded more for the pleasure it provides in the moment than for its cultural and social importance. This shift towards a more personal and superficial attitude towards food might lead to a loss of cultural heritage and identity as well as a detachment from the social and communal aspects of eating. A sociological perspective that investigates the phenomenon of food pornography and its impact on our connection with food and body image may be enlightening. This perspective should take into account concepts like cultural capital, the social construction of beauty, and the culture of consumption.

The idea of cultural capital put forward by Pierre Bourdieu in 1996 contributes to the analysis of the appeal of food obscenity and its detrimental repercussions. The practices, knowledge, and practices that are extremely valuable within a given social group or culture are the subject of cultural capital. In the context of food pornography, excessive and indulgent diets are seen as a kind of cultural capital, indicating a specific status and lifestyle that is highly valued within particular social groups. Influencers and bloggers who promote these diets may thereby increase their cultural capital and get respect from their peers. Implementing a sociological framework that considers the idea of cultural capital, which relates to cultural knowledge, the attractiveness of food porn, and its adverse effects.

Luxurious and extravagant diets are considered as a sort of cultural capital in the context of food porn, signifying a particular status and way of life that is highly appreciated in particular social circles. Influencers and bloggers who follow these diets might build up cultural capital and increase their social standing and influence. Nevertheless, the pursuit of cultural capital can have negative effects, such as excessive or binge eating of fatty foods. This is because cultural capital frequently connotes exclusivity and uniqueness, causing people to crave additional pleasures even when they are neither sustainable nor healthy. The popularity of "food challenges" and competitions that have exploded on YouTube and other media serves as an example of this trend.

But pursuing cultural assets can also have negative effects, including overconsumption and binge eating of luxurious foods. This is so because cultural capital is frequently linked to rarity and exclusivity, which arouses cravings for more of the same pleasures even when they are not sustainable or healthy. The trend of "food challenges" and contests that have appeared on YouTube and social media platforms, where viewers are encouraged to consume enormous amounts of food in a little period of time, often in an effort to achieve social recognition and status, is indicative of this issue.

The social construction of beauty is another idea that helps explain how food pornography affects our connection with body image. According to this view, beauty standards are socially produced and prone to change through time and between cultures, rather than being innate or universal. Regarding food pornography, the focus on particular sorts of sumptuous and splurge-worthy foods as desirable and notable fosters constrictive and erroneous beauty standards that are frequently connected to thinness and a particular body form. This could encourage viewers who don't fit this ideal to feel inadequate and have low self-esteem, and it might also encourage unhealthy eating disorders and dieting habits.

The concept of consuming culture in connection to food pornography has been discussed by scholars like Gyorgy Scrinis (2013). Our present period of functional nutritionism, in which the emphasis has turned to targeted nutrients, superfoods, and optimum diets, follows the era of good and bad nutritionism, which established nutricentric dietary rules and defined the boundaries of dangerous nutrients. The conclusion of the book demonstrates how nutritionism has synchronised consumer expectations and perceived requirements with the financial objectives of food businesses and producers. The food quality paradigm, which emphasises high-quality food production and processing, cultural and traditional knowledge, and sensual and practical experience, also provides an alternative framework for evaluating the healthfulness of foods. It encourages less reductive approaches to nutrition research and dietary recommendations

Continual exposure to pictures of extravagant and cost-prohibitive foods, according to Bell and Valentine (Bell and Valentine, 1997), can lead to emotions of shame and regret over food choices as well as an emphasis on the aesthetic attractiveness of food rather than its cultural and nutritional significance.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan (2006) is an excellent text that explores the concept of the culture of consuming in relation to food. In this book, Pollan explores the contemporary food system and its impacts on both the environment and human health. He claims that our culture of consumption has led to an overabundance of processed and industrialised foods, many of which are high in sugar, fat, and salt and contribute to the rise in obesity and chronic illnesses. Pollan is a supporter of a return to agricultural practises that are more traditional and environmentally friendly, where consumers are more conscious of the sources of their food.

The link between consumerism and food is addressed in "Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal" by Eric Schlosser. Schlosser examines the fast food industry and its influence on American society, discussing issues including labour exploitation and the harmful

effects of mass-produced, high-calorie, low-nutrient foods on human health and the environment. He contends that the fast food sector is an illustration of how our culture of consumerism prioritises convenience and instant gratification over quality, health, and sustainability. Schlosser emphasises in his book the significance of people making more ethical and responsible food choices and being more conscious of how those choices influence both themselves and the environment.

The promotion of sustainable and ethical food practices that put cultural significance and nutritional worth ahead of aesthetic appeal and economic interests is essential if we are to lessen these negative effects. This calls for a change in our cultural perspectives on food as well as an awareness of its cultural and social significance. Food is more than simply fuel, says MacClancy (1997): "Food is culture." Due to the threat that food commercialization poses to these values, we must highlight cultural and ethical concerns in our food practices and reject it.

#### Conclusion:

The system of cultural production and consumption that puts visual appeal and financial interests before of cultural and nutritional worth is a complex and varied issue that calls for critical analysis and response. This system has many facets, including food pornography, and its effects on our culture, society, and health should not be disregarded.

Challenges to the system's fundamental assumptions and attitudes are essential, as is the promotion of alternative food production and consumption models that put a premium on cultural authenticity, nutritional value, and environmental sustainability in order to solve this problem. This might involve advocating for laws and practices that support healthy and sustainable food options as well as promoting traditional cooking methods and recipes.

The cultural and social significance of food must be acknowledged, and the variety and wealth of culinary traditions across the world must be cherished. Incorporating food to promote social justice and fairness, cultural expression, and community building may be successful strategies.

As a result, food pornography is a complex subject that illuminates views towards food, culture, and identity in many cultural contexts. By analysing and confronting the cultural production and consumption system that places a premium on aesthetic appeal and economic interests above cultural and nutritional worth, we may create healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food systems as well as a more fair and inclusive society.

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