

Abstract

Food porn is a popular term in the digital platform. It refers to how food is showcased in visual media sites. Some of the common and interesting terminologies which are associated with food porn are unhealthy food, healthy food, #Food Porn, and so on. While examining this term in academics, we must deal with how food has a connection with physiological, psychological, political, economic, social, cultural, and critical aspects. The term food porn, as we see, consists of two words—food and porn. Food generally refers to those things which can help us to fulfil our hunger. Moreover, it is an everyday used term and also used as symbolic in many ways. On the other hand, term porn which carries a different significance in society. It is mostly associated with some kind of taboo, restriction, or banning, a term that is not openly used in a so-called civilized public space. So, the term ‘food porn’ carries both the characteristics of commonness or ordinariness as well as at the same time, some taboo, restriction, secretiveness, guilty pleasure, and guilty conscience.

The word porn is used informally in place of the term pornography which means any text that is intended for sexual arousal. The present study examines how it has different connotations in the context of food. The concept of food porn in the contemporary time includes many connotations. For instance, how a pornographic lens is used to showcase different items of food, how the notions of healthy and unhealthy food are associated with food porn, and how that is constantly delivered to the viewers’ psyche, as well as how food consumption has a deeper connection with capitalism. These are some of the key issues that the present study deals with. Moreover, the study focuses on the position of food porn in the digital platform in the context of India where we many people are lacking basic needs for living— food, shelter, and clothing.

The concepts of “healthy” and “unhealthy” food have many discourses since they are cultural constructs. Generally, the phrase healthy food refers to those food items that contribute to physical and mental growth. In contrast, the phrase unhealthy food refers to those food items that are believed to be harmful to biological and mental health and are called junk foods. But the most important thing is that whether a food item is healthy or unhealthy, there is no meaning in the context of food porn since it is a popular site that is based on illusion or simulation. Thus, the present study attempts to understand how such

concepts as healthy and unhealthy food are also political and complicated to define since the whole idea of food porn revolves around fake food.

The basic focus of the whole discussion is to look at how the sites of food porn have a significant connection with the discourse of gaze. The present work is based on the methodologies of Cultural Studies. French philosophy greatly influenced the field of Cultural Studies, and the scholarship of French philosophy around gaze is historically very rich. Jacques Lacan is one of the most prominent French philosophers who contributed to the field of psychoanalysis, which the field of Cultural Studies relies upon. His theory of gaze is significant in the field of Cultural Studies which is why the present study is based on this theoretical standpoint. Lacan opined that any object that is gazed at by someone is somehow gazed back at the onlooker and in this process, the object does it as if in its own will. So, the gaze of the object has a particular power over the onlooker. In the context of this study, the food porn products can be considered as objects and the viewers are the onlookers. Thus it is not only the viewers who have power over their gaze but this power is shared by objects (the food porn products) too. Most importantly, this power of the gaze is held by the food porn products through seduction, and this seduction can be understood through various techniques as discussed in the present study. In this attempt, how the gaze of the object (here the food porn products) overpowers the viewers' gaze is explored.

Moreover, the study also examines how food porn sites create an illusion to entangle the gaze of the viewers. Food porn is known to seduce hunger in many ways. However, to seduce hunger, the gaze is to be taken into prime consideration, as without holding the attention of the gaze, seducing hunger is not possible. It can be said that gaze is the gateway to seduce hunger. This hunger used in food porn is not necessarily the physiological hunger; food porn plays with the psychological hunger, and so, seducing the gaze is important. So, this study mainly examines how the various ways of seducing the gaze are associated with the concept of food. This seduction of gaze and hunger is not at all a natural process but is a product of capitalism. It creates such an environment where food porn products get a space to seduce the gaze of the viewers. Thus food porn sites such as food vlogs and photographs are analysed to understand this relationship to capitalism.

Keywords: Food Porn, Tippy Bartender, Swisse Me Advertisement, Food Porn Apps., Advertisement, Alessio Mamo, Lacanian Gaze, Seduction, Sexuality.