

# **Chapter 3**

## **Social Construction of Food in the Visual Media Texts**

## CHAPTER-3

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“Rub my butt with spices Baste my breasts with olive oil

Slather my wings and thighs with sauce Butter my thighs, slow broil

Ah, the savoury delights of a summer BBQ!” — A poem by Linda Alice Fowler (2022).

#### 3.1 Introduction

The word food porn is currently getting very wide exposure. It is popularly associated with the usage of highly evocative pictures of food at different sites such as restaurants, tourist destinations, on the streets, on social media, and on websites, as discussed in the first chapter. In the previous chapter, the commoditization of female bodies along with sexuality has been discussed at length. For this particular chapter, the focus of analysis is moved toward the food items from human bodies that are being showcased or represented in the frame of food porn.

Among the scholars who have contributed to coining the term “food porn” and popularizing it is Michael F. Jacobson. Jacobson was born on July 29, 1943. He is an American scientist and nutrition advocate. Jacobson along with two fellow scientists named James B. Sullivan and Albert J. Fritsch co-founded the Center for Science in the Public Interest in 1971. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit watchdog and consumer advocacy organization focused on food safety, nutrition and health, and alcohol policy. In this particular organization's newsletter *Nutrition Action Healthletter*, Jacobson used the term “right stuff” referring to healthy food and food porn referring to unhealthy food regarding food and nutrition (McBride, 2010, 38). He concluded that food porn is unhealthy as it just plays with the human senses and does not provide any kind of nutrition. Therefore, another important notion that is associated with the concept of food porn is the nature of unhealthy food (McBride, 2010).

There are many scholars and academicians who followed Jacobson's idea that food porn is unhealthy and nutrition-wise, food porn gives zero benefit to the consumers. Many scholars, academicians, and other food porn practitioners, however, believe in perspectives other than unhealthy notions in regard to food porn. To understand and explore them would be a fascinating task in the arena of food porn as a concept. Of the many different perspectives on the concept of food porn, a very less explored and less touched perspective is the idea that sometimes food porn can be depicted as healthy food, healthy eating habits, and other food-related healthy habits. Moreover, Jacobson coined the term food porn but earlier to that it was Cockburn (1987) who coined a concept called gastro-porn. According to Erin Metz McDonnell (2016, 243), Alexander Cockburn's idea of gastro-porn is more relevant in contemporary times as compared to Jacobson's idea of food porn. Following is Cockburn's idea of gastro-porn:

Now it cannot escape attention that there are curious parallels between manuals on sexual techniques and manuals on the preparation of food; the same studious emphasis on leisurely technique, the same apostrophes to the ultimate, heavenly delights. True gastro-porn heightens the excitement and also the sense of the unattainable by proffering colored photographs of various completed recipes. Cockburn (1987)

Jacobson and Cockburn's insights on food porn serve as the foundational base for this chapter. Jacobson's idea on food porn seems to be contradictory to the chapter's emphasis on healthy food porn. However, the most interesting part of this chapter is to explore healthy food porn and which is based on the concept of Jacobson's food porn that believes food porn is unhealthy in the context of nutrition and other necessary ingredients of food. It can be said that this chapter is an attempt to know if there exists anything called 'healthy food porn'. In the journey of exploring the idea of healthy food porn, the seduction of gaze is also being studied. A brief understanding of what is 'healthy food' in general, is important to study before getting into the world of healthy food porn.

### **3.2 Healthy Food: A Brief Discussion**

Lucy Long, a scholar of folklore and food studies, has done many works on food and folklore. One of her articles “Case: Food and Folklore” published in 2022 as a book chapter sheds light on how the idea of food and food traditions helps us to understand why people eat the things they do and sometimes the same food has different meanings in different regions. Likewise, the concept of healthy food is also dynamic, having many discourses. It is difficult to define healthy food in one or two definitions as healthy food means different for different people in different cultures. For this chapter, to understand the concept of healthy food porn, it is immensely necessary to make it clear what kind of food is referred to as healthy food. Another important point to be noted in this context is those whose idea of healthy food is being considered in this work. This work primarily reads food porn from the perspectives of its producers, but the notion of healthy food is being studied from the perspective of the consumers of food porn.

### **3.3 Healthy Food from Consumer’s Lens**

Some academic books and articles that address the topic of healthy eating are being taken into consideration for the study in this chapter. In an article titled "Healthy food is nutritious, but organic food is healthy because it is pure: The negotiation of healthy food choices by Danish consumers of organic food," Kia Ditlevsen, Peter Sandøe, and Jesper Lassen (2019, 4) addressed how Danish consumers perceived healthy food. Even though it discusses particular traits of Danish consumers and how they view healthful food, it will at least make some points clear. This article interestingly depicts some points to understand what healthy food is. This article figures out a set of three distinctive and overarching concepts to assess the healthiness of food by studying the consumers: health as nutritional value; health as pleasure; and health as purity. Understanding health as nutritional, a food is considered as healthy, when it has a good amount of nutrients in it, moreover, organic food as compared to other processed food contains high nutrients, and so, organic food can be considered healthy food. Secondly, healthy as pleasure, again the healthiness of food is defined by the sensory pleasure it brings for the consumer, and the experience of eating is to be ‘happy’ and the foods that satiate better than food of low quality which makes consumers eat less but fulfils the stomach with good quality nutrients gives pleasure. Organic food has the quality of making one eat less, but feel better and satiated. Thus, organic food products are healthier than their conventional counterparts. Furthermore, the third characteristic of healthy food is that Health is purity:

purity is naturalness, absence of pollution, additives, preservatives, and residues of any kind. So, organic foods have these qualities. Thus, from this article, it can be concluded that the qualities of healthy food can be found in organic foods. Organic foods mean fresh or processed food produced by organic farming methods. Organic foods are grown without the use of synthetic chemicals, such as human-made pesticides and fertilizers, and do not contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Some examples of organic foods are vegetables, fruits, grains, and dairy products.

To get into what is healthy eating according to people's perception of healthy eating, an understanding from Marie-Claude Paquette's "Perceptions of Healthy Eating: State of Knowledge and Research Gaps" article is discussed here. Paquette reviewed the literature on the perception of people on healthy eating, and according to the perception, these are items considered healthy foods- 1) vegetables and fruits, 2) meat, 3) low levels of fat, salt, and sugar, 4) quality aspects, such as fresh, unprocessed and homemade foods, and 5) concepts of balance, variety, and moderation. Paquette also sheds some light on the fact that people's perception of healthy eating is based on the notions of "good" and "bad" foods which means healthy and less healthy foods. Vegetables and fruits are perceived as a healthy eating category, but it is not clear how much one needs to eat to be healthy. Such notions are subjects of multiple meanings and interpretations. By 'healthy' food, we refer to the food which is beneficial physically and nutritionally. Attributing the superiority of one food item over other food items is ethnocentric in nature, which is not the focus of the present study.

### **3.4 A Discussion on Healthy Food Trends and Conscious Capitalism**

The term conscious capitalism refers to a socially responsible economic and political philosophy. The core idea behind conscious capitalism is that businesses should operate to attain profits as well as within ethical boundaries. This means that in this form of capitalism, the idea is to serve all involved stakeholders, including the employees, humanity, and the environment—not just the management teams and shareholders. It is something that the wealthy will ultimately benefit everyone from economic policies.

The idea of conscious capitalism, as discussed in the first chapter of this work, has a close relation to healthy food. John Mackey, a University dropout, aspired to open a natural foods supermarket in his place, Texas. This aspiration made him open with his

partner, Renee Lawson, Safer way in 1979, a whole foods grocery store in small scale. Later on, it was merged with Clarksville Natural Grocery owned by Mark Skiles and Craig Weller. In 1980, they together, opened a larger natural foods store. It became so popular and profitable that Walmart and other supermarkets have copied Mackey's health food model. In 2007, Mackey found out after the publication of *Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose* by R. S. Sisodia, David B. Wolfe, and J. N. Sheth, that a group of people from academia also followed the same idea. Mackey met author Rajendra Sisodia, and along with several other business people and academics, decided to start holding meetings to attract interest in this yet-to-be-named movement. Finally, a new term was added to answer the above-mentioned movement- the "Conscious Capitalism Movement". This is how conscious capitalism and healthy food are related. Moreover, this whole issue helps to understand that the idea of healthy food porn can be said to exist and it can be said that it has its base, it is not baseless. However, the whole situation, environment, and circumstances that gave a push to popularizing 'healthy food porn' during COVID-19 demand a separate study. So, further discussions in this chapter include an emphasis on healthy food porn as a seducing element during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Before discussing healthy food porn and the Covid-19 pandemic, an example can be taken from Ibrahim's (2015, 7) 'Food Porn and the Invitation to Gaze: Ephemeral Consumption and the Digital Spectacle' to understand how food porn and capitalism are intimately related to each other.

With print culture, broadcasting, advertising, and branding, food imagery entered a realm of consumer capitalism denoting the construction of desire and its circulation through mass media platforms. The selling and packaging of food to the masses drew on our nostalgic bonds with food while recruiting consumers for advertisers. Food porn in the hands of capital sought to create a consumption community through desire for new offerings on the market. Food advertising came through our TV sets and magazines, offering the ease of assemblage to the homemakers, enticing new audiences while renewing our intrinsic ties with food in domestic settings. The increasing incorporation of leisure readings in newspapers and proliferation of lifestyle and women's

magazine also socialised us into accepting stylised food imagery as part of a new consumer culture which packaged fantasy, escapism and romance into everyday fast moving consumer products. Advertising of food took it to new heights pledging desire and enticement through the lens, which could yield pleasure and yearning en masse. (Ibrahim 2015, 7)

In this particular article, Ibrahim talks about food porn and its development in the context of different times. While going through Ibrahim's discussion of food porn and its historical journey, it is very clearly seen that capitalism has a prime role in making food porn significant for society. Ibrahim shed light on food porn's journey from print culture till now it remains significant by adopting the new environment.

It can be understood that food porn as a site of contemporary times is an indispensable part of consumer capitalism and capitalism as a whole. However, in this chapter conscious capitalism is studied as one of the important aspects of capitalism, which is discussed in the later part of this chapter with examples from the select texts.

Moreover, with reference to the popularity and existence of healthy food porn, the idea of 'orthorexic society' as coined by sociologist Guido Nicolosi, may be another significant explanation. In the article "Food-ography: Food and new media" of Calefato, Fortuna, and Scelzi (2016, 373), the idea of an 'orthorexic society' by sociologist Guido Nicolosi, is discussed very clearly.

That is why Nicolosi coined the term orthorexic society referring to orthorexic nervous syndrome, a psycho-cultural disease studied by Bratman and Knight (2001), who defined it as an obsession for permanent and appropriate nourishment characterized by hyper-reflection. Our society can therefore be defined as orthorexic due to this hyper-reflection and its several ways of depicting it. Calefato, Fortuna, and Scelzi (2016, 373)

Orthorexic society refers to a society where people are becoming more and more concerned about healthy and nutritious food, so it even creates a problem for obsession and hence this habit ultimately becomes unhealthy. Thus, food porn and its noble addition of healthiness in it can also be understood as one of the products of this kind of

phenomenon. In reference to Orthorexic society in the context of the present study, it is to be noted that the concept is mentioned to make a point that overindulgence and obsession with healthy food is also a negative cause for human health as a whole. Its relation to healthy food as well as healthy food porn as a whole can be seen in a direct way but its relationship to food porn and pornography in that matter is not being tried to establish through this study.

There can be many explanations for how healthy food porn came, but one thing is certain through every aspect, capitalism is trying to seduce the gaze of the consumers.

During the period from the Pre-COVID to the COVID-19 pandemic period, it is interesting to notice a prominent shift in focus on food items and the presentation in the world of food porn through the lens of gaze. Looking at how prominently healthy food porn is being established during a short span of time is a part of this chapter. Moreover, this attempt also includes an understanding of how healthy food porn in particular and food porn as a whole is attracting people or what is/are seduction techniques being utilized more specifically in the virtual space. One point to be noted is that healthy food porn is not a very new concept and basically, it cannot be said that it started during the COVID-19 pandemic period. However, the researcher observed that it was more utilized during this period. Healthy food porn is used as the need of the hour and is being established as the work of conscious capitalism.

### **3.5 A Brief Note on Corona Virus and ‘First Wave of Covid-19 Pandemic’**

The disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 was first detected in Wuhan, China on 17 November 2019. During this time it was not seen as a threat to the whole world (Mohan and Nambiar, 2020). Within no time the virus SARS-CoV-2 increased its numbers through multiple mutations. These mutations multiplied themselves into creating a public health emergency of international concern during the month of January 2020. Finally, this virus took the face of a global pandemic initiating nationwide lockdowns among many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic reached its peak in the months of March to July roughly around the world; in fact, it may have varied a little bit with respect to different places. In an article mentioned by Dutta (2021), the crest-trough pattern of the spread of an endemic or pandemic is called a ‘wave’. The virus subsided to a certain extent due to various reasons and cases fell substantially. Again due to its multiplying



natural and other factors, there was a surge in infections. This is termed the second wave and if the crest and trough process of virus mutations and infections rise it might lead to the third wave (Health Desk, 2021). The SARS-CoV-2 virus spread and infection story was the same. After the recognition of the COVID-19 situation as a pandemic, it reached its peak from March to June 2020 which was the crest of the Covid-19 and the First (1st) wave. After some time it substantially fell and thus started the trough. So this was the gap between the first and the second waves. This may vary in some countries as in Africa the first wave started in the latter part of 2020, which is a delay in the rise of the virus as compared to the US, UK, India, and most other countries. Thus, from this, it can be said that roughly from March 2020 till August 2020 a crest-trough situation had been observed. So, this period can be regarded as the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Again, the next crest and trough situation was the second wave but only for some countries like India. In this context, the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, that is, from March 2020 to August 2020 needs to be studied. The next important issue for this attempt is the characteristic that is typical to the first wave; the health protection and immunity-boosting of social beings (Maragakis, 2021). Moreover, it is to be mentioned that, the reason behind the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic period is being taken into consideration for this attempt is, this is the period when healthy food porn had been pronounced more and more.

### **3.6 An Overall Observation of the Main Concerns during the First Wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

A surface-level observation of the elements and the environment for the phenomenon of food porn during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is an important aspect to be discussed. During the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, the popularity of the term ‘food porn’ was not decreasing but rather increasing. Thus, a study would be interesting to understand the peculiar nature or feature/s of food porn that helped in making itself relevant to the harsh pandemic times too. Due to the sudden announcement of lockdowns everywhere around the world, online platforms were the only medium of communication. Hence, online platforms and their content got more focus and popularized. Thus, food porn, which in general focuses on online platforms, became more significant during Covid-19 times. YouTube, as a social media platform when observed, from the lens of food porn in the context of the first wave of the Covid-19

pandemic, some very interesting videos surfaced in the timeline. Two of the many videos from YouTube are being examined in this chapter for analyzing how the concept of healthy food porn is being associated with food porn to seduce the viewers along with the promise of conscious capitalism. These two videos are the Swisse Me smoothie advertisement video and the Food Porn App advertisement video. The reason for selecting these two videos as texts is that these videos were released during the time of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Swisse Me smoothie advertisement video was published on 14th May 2020 on YouTube and Food Porn App advertisement on 17th July 2020. The videos concerned can be seen emphasizing the healthiness of the food and also the availability of food (how availability is significant for this attempt is discussed in a later part). This discussion is a brief idea, regarding the social media platforms with special reference to YouTube and its emphasis on some specific symbols only. Moreover, healthy food porn is the main attraction of these two videos.

The following section showcases how healthiness and hygiene were considered the need of the hour during the period of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, food porn using conscious capitalism floods food-related industries with healthy food porn.

Some of the examples show how different articles, posts, and others focus on healthy food (for boosting immunity in humans) as a weapon to fight the disease.

A discussion put forward by UC Health (2020),

Eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and daily exercise are some of the important tips for the holistic aspects of an individual. Now more than ever with the COVID-19 outbreak, we need to find ways to boost our immune system as much as possible. Making sure that one is eating a diet high in immune-boosting nutrients is one way to take an active role in maintaining one's health and wellness. The human body uses and absorbs nutrients more efficiently when one is using food from a variety of sources like fruits and vegetables, rather than processed foods or supplements. Getting a variety of these foods and nutrients in someone's diet is more essential than focusing on just one or two

in large quantities. The more varieties in the plate from the list below, the better we are.

Another website named, SRL World also offers its views regarding COVID-19 and health in the following ways,

With the spread of the COVID-19, the whole world is fighting it together. Although there is no vaccination available so far, the best way to fight this pandemic is to stay away from it by taking precautions, building immunity, and abiding by government regulations. (SRLTeam, 2020).

From these discussions, it is known that eating healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic times is one of the major concerns along with maintaining hygiene. Thus, further, in this attempt, it is being tried to discuss how the food porn industry using the ideology of conscious capitalism led to the use and popularization of healthy food porn as their source of profit.

### **3.7 Looking at Covid-19 Pandemic Time and Discussing Food Porn in Pre-Covid-19 Times**

From the above discussion, it is being noted that healthy food (or immunity-boosting food) and hygiene are the two main concerns of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, these ideas will be the basics of further discussions. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, food porn was not only an affair of online platforms, it was flourishing online as well as offline. The fast-food courts, restaurants, tourist attractions, and many more places are very significant offline platforms for food porn for the viewers. Food porn on online platforms before Covid was for enjoyment and had an inviting gaze for the viewers. During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, enjoying the inviting gaze of food porn was there, but because outside readymade food was absent or scarce, viewers of food porn tried to recreate the actions shown in the food porn videos. Earlier (pre-covid times) the idea of food porn was mostly associated with the idea of watching others that how cook, garnish, and serve attractive-looking food, which may be delicious as well; but the viewers do not engage themselves in cooking (although exceptions are also prevalent always).

This can be seen as discussed by McBride (2010, 38): “Food porn is nothing but watching others cook on television or gazing at unattainable dishes in glossy magazines without actually cooking oneself”. One of the trending instances of watching and cooking during the first wave of Covid-19 that is also on the food porn list is the popularity of Dalgona coffee. On YouTube, some videos became a trend during the first wave such as cooking with the use of lesser items, for example baking a cake without ‘maida’ (common flour), without egg and many more such trends. During this particular time of Covid-19, scarcity of food was a major issue. On the contrary, before Covid times, aesthetics lay in abundance or excess of food. Thus, looking at the pre-Covid-19 food porn from the lens of Covid-19 pandemic times, another important element or characteristic can be observed. The food porn during this period had to deal with the issue of food scarcity. Thus, some characteristics associated with food porn during Covid time, are as follows

- An emphasis on healthy food porn and hygiene
- The online food porn viewers became more committed to trying and putting the final product post online which created another series of food porn videos and photos,
- The importance of showcasing the availability of food in excess, through online mode
- The online mode became the one and only most significant medium for doing food porn.

The above-mentioned points can be observed from the practical field of visual media and some texts are selected for the study. Lucy Long(2022) in the Introduction of the *Special Issue: Folkloristic Perspectives on Foodways and Comfort During the Covid-19 Pandemic* said, “The cookbook publishing industry and food news media similarly presented comfort food as a special genre of food, set apart from the usual evaluations of “good” food. These industries both reflected vernacular attitudes and shaped them. As the pandemic up-ended everyday life, our usual rules for behavior were suspended, including the norms by which we judged food and foodways activities. Comfort food thus became an acceptable and celebrated way of weathering the uncertainties and fears caused by COVID-19.” Let us discuss the select visual media texts during this period.

### **3.8 Food Porn in Visual Media Texts during the Period of COVID-19 Pandemic: An Analysis (with Special Reference to YouTube Videos)**

It is impossible to talk about the Covid-19 pandemic and food without acknowledging the global structural inequalities, suffering, and pain, unexpected death, caused by the emergency of healthcare infrastructure and medical that had been crippled by the amount of resources spends on the above-mentioned sectors. Even the wealthiest economies in the world suddenly experienced economic slowdowns, starvation, and countless deaths. Education systems have been affected badly and consumer cultures came almost to a stagnant position as people were traumatized by the touch and spreading of the virus. A new life started where people lived mostly online as the world slowed down, people retreated into their homes, and the privileged ones established a new normal in the safety of their encumbered communities and stored resources (Shah, 2020, 98).

Based on these situations, some other activities became the ‘new normal’ during the pandemic times, like hoarding food, comfort cooking, and hyper-aestheticization of food by applying the finest filters. Hunger or nutrition took a backstage place, and global inequality became more pronounced. Moreover, there can be observed two extreme kinds of subjects of food—one marked by obscene plenty and the other by extreme deprivation—cohabiting in the same space of our social media spectacles requires a deeper reading (Shah, 2020, 99).

Thus, the result of these situations carries a very interesting set of activities that can be observed in the visual media platforms, special attention is focused on YouTube videos. To be more precise, two videos are taken into consideration to examine how the concept of being healthy is projected.

### **3.9 The Texts**

For this chapter two advertisement videos are considered for study, one is Swisse Me Smoothie Advertisement and another is Food Porn App Advertisement.

Swisse Me Smoothie Advertisement (2020, May 13)

Swisse Me Smoothie Advertisement is a Vitamin supplement, a skincare brand named Swisse, produces different types of multivitamins and skincare products that provide

nutrient-rich ingredients worldwide. This brand also produces a range of smoothies that are promoted as having nutrient-rich fruits. They are showcased with the help of an advertisement directed by Rowan Adams and seen as a new trend-setting advertisement in terms of food porn. Rowan Adams, states, “This isn’t just any food porn commercial, it is healthy food porn commercial” (cited in Clarke, 2020). As we know, food porn is generally considered unhealthy or it is something based on illusion. But Adam’s concept is completely different from the idea which has previously been understood as food porn. The video of the advertisement for Swisse Me smoothies was published on May 14, 2020, on YouTube during the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A similar strategy of using healthy food porn in an advertisement can be seen in the Food Porn App.

Food Porn App Advertisement (2020, July 17)

A food Porn App is an application (or app) that helps one in finding a restaurant; one can also review and rate any restaurant around the world. This application claims that it is honest in sharing reviews and ratings of different restaurants for its customers and along with it, also offers to help its customers find the best cheap eats in their neighbourhood. The food porn app basically follows the idea that it provides its consumers with the best tool to “eat like a local”. To discuss the content of the food porn app’s advertisement, where some fruits and so-called ‘healthy foods’ are being showcased in a more sexually explicit manner but unlike the advertisement of Swisse Me smoothie, without mentioning the term healthy food porn. This advertisement video was published on July 17, 2020, on YouTube, during the period of the 1st wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3.9.1 Reading the ‘Healthy Food Porn’ in the videos of *Swisse Me Smoothie* and *Food porn app***

The publishing period or time of both the advertisement videos of Swisse Me Smoothie and Food porn app are respectively May and July 2020 on YouTube, which can be put as roughly during the first wave period of the Covid-19 pandemic (as already mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter). In the case of both the videos, Swisse Me Smoothie advertisement video and Food Porn App advertisement video, the use of healthy food with the pretext of creating immunity can be seen very clearly. The rationale for promoting healthy food and immunity in the media during the first wave of COVID-19 is

discussed in the literature of UC Health (2020) and SRL Team (2020). Moreover, a statement from Nykkea Maretic, from the Swisse Me group explains:

“There’s nothing more natural than getting a mouthful of fruit, which is exactly what our smoothies are packed with. All the goodness, and none of the filth. We can deliver them straight to your letterbox too, in case you want to be discreet.” And that, “We know how tricky it is to get in daily vitamins and minerals, so we’ve made it super easy with handy smoothies in 12 deliciously naughty flavors.” (SWNS Digital, 2020a.)

This particular statement from the makers showcases how they are trying to include healthy, immunity-boosting as well as hygienic foods in their packages. Furthermore, a clear picture is being elaborated by the makers in the following way, quoted from the article *New Commercial for Healthy Fruit Smoothies branded TOO RUDE for TV*” by Darren Stocking (2020),

“It begins with a shot of a pert pair of avocados, followed by an upright length of banana being stroked with a single female finger and a man plunging two fingers into a juicy orange. The advert progresses with sensual images of an apricot being prised open, a man cupping a pair of hairy kiwi fruits and running his finger over a bulbous avocado stone. As a banana rises into view, dripping in honey, smoothie juice drips from the centre of a strawberry. The final scenes show a lemon and avocado squeezed with vigour, a banana break in half, and the geyser of smoothie flying spinach leaves.”



Fig: 3.1 *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swisse Me, 2020b, 0:01)

Apart from the many 'healthy' definitions of the advertisement video of the *Swisse Me* smoothie as discussed earlier, a tour of the advertisement video will provide a more vivid picture. The video starts with displaying the so-called healthy and immunity-building fruits such as bananas, tomatoes, strawberries, whipped cream, apples, watermelon, white flour, dough kneading, some vegetables, papaya with seeds, citrus fruits, cake, etc. The video basically includes the genre of fruits as it is very clear that the product is a smoothie of healthy fruits that are perceived as helpful in boosting immunity.



Fig:3.2. *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swisse Me, 2020b, 0:11)

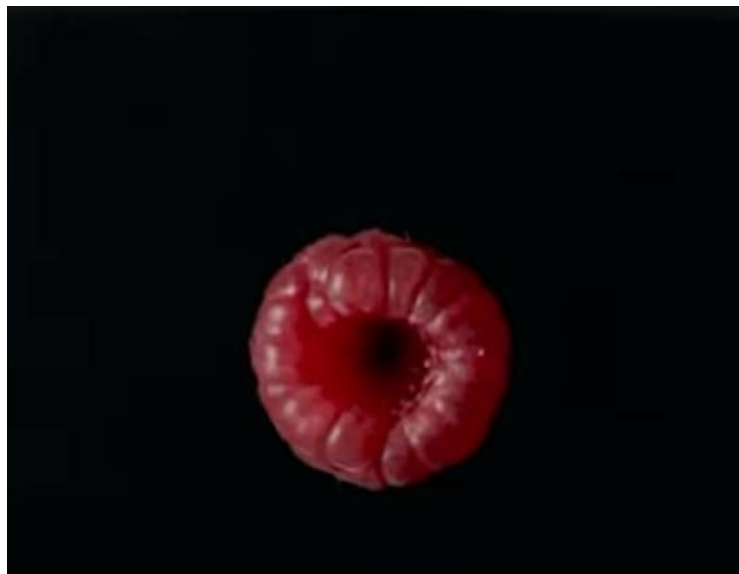




Fig: 3.3 *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swisse Me, 2020b, 0:07-0:08)



Fig: 3.4 FoodPorn. Source: (Foodporn, 2020, 0:33)



Fig: 3.5 Foodporn Source (Foodporn, 2020, 0:11)

The same process can be seen in the Food porn app advertisement too, where healthy foods with the promise of boosting immunity are being showcased with intensity.

This phenomenon can be understood from a concept called the ‘Paranoid thinking machine’ of Clemens Apprich which has been used by Nishant Shah (2020, 101) as the phenomenon of ‘Paranoia of Scarcity’. For his paper entitled, “#Foodporn in the Age of Coronavirus (an Epilogue)”, a paranoid thinking machine has been used to understand the idea of food scarcity as well as the idea of healthy food and boosting immunity. According to Clemens Apprich (2018, 117), the Paranoid thinking machine refers to “A paranoid thinking machine, understood as a theoretical concept, tries to compensate the symbolic void by filling it with meaning.” In this regard to the Covid-19 pandemic, the symbolic void is compensated by many meanings. These meanings are discussed in the following section.

### **3.9.2 Understanding the Concept of ‘Paranoia of Scarcity’ and Food Porn in the Covid-19 Pandemic**

During the time of the first wave of the COVID-19 phenomenon, the declaration of worldwide lockdown ultimately influenced the transport and closing of various factories, industries, shops, and other important institutions that are responsible for the supply and production of food. Various anti-social ways such as hoarding and price hikes, etc. increased and several political reasons also played an important role in the food supply chain. Thus, in this way, an environment of the scarcity of food items spread on a large scale. To cope with these difficult situations, some social construction activities that always work and may or may not be visible through normal vision, have emerged. As said by Clemens Apprich (2018, p. 115), these activities include a paranoid desire that can be seen as a self-healing mechanism, a protective function to reappropriate the world. In the COVID-19 pandemic times, only online remained as the medium for the societal population to communicate. Thus, it can be used as a tool to understand the societal beliefs that are embedded in the media-technological environments in order to function properly in this simulated world. In both the advertisement videos, the *Swisse Me Smoothie* and *Food porn App*, it can be seen how food is being showcased as available in excess without acknowledging the real situations that are prevailing, like scarcity of food.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Nishant Shah (2020) appropriates Clemens Apprich’s concept of Paranoia in the context of scarcity, as it can be understood in a more precise way. Shah observes that the scarcity of food leads to the paranoid overproduction of

foods digitally on media platforms that are believed to soon disappear or become scarce in turn helps social beings to stop worrying about the politics of food and the paucity of resources which are so critically experienced and witnessed during the crisis. The same concept goes for the idea of healthy eating and obsession with healthy foods for boosting immunity.

In addition to this, an observation can be made that it is not only the consumers who are in a relieved state by indulging themselves in an illusionary imagination of an abundant state. The capitalist in a way earns profit out of this too. In two aspects the capitalist is in a profitable state, the first aspect is that as the overproduction of healthy as well as abundant images in the videos (the texts), the capitalist earns revenue directly from the advertisements. The second aspect, due to the reason that the viewers are busy in making themselves home in the videos takes away the real issue of scarcity and the horror of the disease, which creates the class distinction in a prominent way, another prime consideration of capitalism. Thus, this way makes the paranoia of scarcity as well as paranoia about healthy and immunity-boosting food, an interesting tool of seduction.

From this study, it can be said that one of the reasons for healthy food porn's existence and popularity in COVID time is conscious capitalism, where capitalists use 'Paranoia of Scarcity' as their weapon of seducing the gaze.

Thus, paranoia of scarcity is one of the seducing agents for attracting the gaze of consumers. Another important element that is also important is the pornographic gaze. The most important element that is being employed in pornographic gaze is 'sexuality'. Capitalism-induced sexuality in food that is being showcased in the frame of food porn. After establishing food's sexuality, commoditization of sexuality is done in various ways and finally, this whole phenomenon creates a seducing environment for the gaze. The sexuality being induced in foods can be understood through the following discussion.

### **3.9.3 Social Construction of Food as Having Sexuality**

In both the videos, Swisse Me and Food Porn App, it can be seen that the food items shown in the videos are something else along with their identity as food. Moreover, it is not just food at all. The food items that include fruits, liquid items like milk, fruit juices, cream, and other items as shown in the videos are more than just food items. It can be understood by the use of the concept social construction of food as having sexuality. To

understand the issue, it is necessary to get to know the food themselves. The language of the food items would be from the creators of the videos who want to engage the viewers in the videos by attributing sexuality to the food items. In the videos, the food items are not constructed as actual human beings but human beings' sexuality is being attributed as one and only quality, they contain to seduce the viewers. However, personification or Prosopopoeia of foods alone will not work but this needs to be followed by some elements, that is, the pornographic angles of the camera. Establishing sexuality in food is being used to serve for pornographic gaze.

In regard to the food, it is known that it has a non-sexual content. So, how capitalism makes use of it for pornographic content use can be understood from another example from Mallari and Kerner (2017, 1-3). They discuss the various characteristics of pornography along with the resemblance between food porn and sexual porn citing the words of Helen Hester (2014, 123) who contends that transgression, prurience, and intensity are the key terms used in defining pornographic texts. These terms are interrelated and impact the human psyche in a number of ways. Mallari and Kerner state that,

“The spectacle of the human body, the emphasis on sexual pleasure and sexual activity, and the authenticity of penetration and bodily reactions to intercourse are some general examples of arousing and effective pornographic material.”(SWNS Digital, 2020b, 0:22)

On the other hand, there is also non-sexual content associated with these texts that can be considered pornographic. Hester describes how sexual arousal can occur even from things that are not essentially sexual materials.

“Sexuality is positioned as being influenced by and founded on sources that in themselves exceed that which we might think of as strictly sexual. It is not a matter of sex per se, but of any and all possible states of power agitation. We might suggest that there is no area of experience that is fully divested of the potential for operating in relation to the sexual—and that the sexual as a concept is in fact quite different from the sexual as an act of genital stimulation” (Mallari and Kerner, 2017, 3).

The effective sexual arousal of an individual can be evoked if those preferences are imposed strongly on the person through visual media. There does not need to be explicit sexual content. Individuals are capable of sexual arousal or any form of visceral reaction

if this is their fetish. This transgression from the implications of modern pornography allows obscure subjects (such as food) to be considered pornographic because they create an intersection between the self and the other.

Some instances are shown in the screenshots of the videos:



Fig: 3.6 *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swiss Me, 2020, 0:17-0:19)



Fig: 3.7 *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swiss Me, 2020, 0:17-0:19)



Fig: 3.8. *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swiss Me, 2020, 0:20-0:21)

### 3.9.4 Texts Viewed from the Pornographic Lens

The texts for this study i.e. *Swisse Me Smoothie and Food Porn app* are studied from a pornographic lens to understand and examine how food porn works.

Erin Metz McDonnell's (2016, 257–259), in her essay titled, 'Food Porn: The Conspicuous Consumption of Food in the Age of Digital Reproduction' offers a discussion on how the pornographic gaze is created through different elements in the video. To understand the pornographic angles in the texts selected for the study, McDonnell's idea of pornographic angles of the camera can be used as a reference. Following are the specific tools McDonnell mentioned in her essay.

**Zoom:** The zooming of the camera lens or the extreme close-up shots of the objects, here the food can be regarded as the most prime and common visual authentication mark of the aesthetics of pornography.

**Frame:** The videographers in food porn or in sexual porn play with the frame, which means that they only highlight the glamorized, spectacular, exotic parts of the whole food porn production process. Framing also necessitates a positioning of the camera-as-viewer and the food object having a meaning of its own.

**Orientation:** Orientation is also an important part of food porn. It helps to view a familiar food from a special aspect which gives the impression that the familiar object is, here the food items seem exotic and perhaps evoke the 'girl next door' fantasy.

Depth of the field: The videographer's skillful use of short depth of field and aesthetics of light holds the viewer's attention and, intimately, pornographically, asks to focus on but the object of our affection, nothing else. The blurred background creates an illusion in our mind that there is (or was) a world out there beyond this food, but the focus holds our gaze. Here the gaze is being held.

In the texts whether the Swisse Me advertisement video or the Food Porn App video, the above-mentioned pornographic angles can be seen.

In the advertisement video of Swisse Me, it can be seen that all the foods, in this context mostly fruits are being shown by heavily zooming in on the entire video along with the product i.e. the Swisse Me smoothie packet. Coming to the frame, it can be also seen, the most sensual ways the fruits are being showcased. The video also takes advantage of the fact that it showcases the most common and available fruits in very unusual ways.

Almost all the fruits are being focussed on ejecting some liquid, along with the product. Here, the fruits are common and very ordinary but the way it is being shown ejecting or ejaculating a liquid is not ordinary and normal. Depth of the field can also be seen in the video. The same story also applies to the Food Porn App advertisement video.



Fig: 3.9 *Foodporn*. Source: (Foodporn, 2020, 0:20)



Fig: 3.10 *FoodPorn*. Source: (Foodporn, 2020, 0:37)

### **3.9.5. Some Specific Attentions (or Peculiar Features) of the Video Texts**

The Food Porn App advertisement video content (FoodPorn, 2020, July 17)The video advertisement starts with the displaying of an advertising electronic board comprising the name of the brand i.e., [www.porn.com](http://www.porn.com), where the lights of the board are flickering. The advertisement follows by focusing on another electronic board where the abbreviation NSFW, which means Not Safe for Work, is being shown. Only after the camera focuses on the NSFW decorated board, do the lights forming the abbreviation start flickering, and then the letter N disappears only SFW remains lit. This whole process of showcasing and hiding letters can be understood as a symbolic way of playing with the abbreviations that suggest a very smart and well-addressed strategy. NSFW refers to the internet slang or shorthand used to mark links to content, videos, or website pages the viewer may not wish to be seen or not appropriate to look at or watch in a public, controlled environment, or formal environment that can be connoted or given as disclaimer means of letting the digital consumers know about the content. (Witman, 2022). The marked content may contain nudity, profanity, slurs, intense sexual scenes, violence, political incorrectness, or any other potentially disturbing subject matter. Again, focusing on SFW, which means Safe for work, is a way to assure digital consumers that it is safe to view content as it only contains healthy and immunity-boosting foods. The advertisement perfectly balances its content which is sexual in nature (NSFW) and at the same time conveys the idea that it only shows a healthy environment (SFW). The video



slowly advances with items such as bananas, citrus fruit, plum, strawberry, avocado, milk, and honey. These are almost all regarded as healthy foods that boost immunity.

Though only the Swisse Me advertisement video articles and the director on different platforms clearly mention that they are doing healthy food porn which cannot be found on any website of Food Porn App. This does not mean that the idea of healthy food porn is absent in the Food porn app advertisement.

Swisse Me advertisement video: In regard to the Swisse Me advertisement video, a very interesting depiction of ejecting fruit smoothies very forcefully from the smoothie packet is notable. The whole video can be understood as each and every individual fruit only symbolizing itself but every fruit that is showcased in the video contributes to the final product, the smoothie, a healthy and more sexually energetic liquid. The video, when looked at from a pornographic angle, can be understood that at the start of the video, the fruits are doing foreplay which is shown through the hand's actions, then go to an orgasmic journey implying through the background sound (sounds are also discussed in later part of this chapter), the final scene is the ejaculation of liquid from the fruits and most importantly through the smoothie packet.



Fig : 3.11 *Swisse Me*. Source: (Swiss Me 2020, 0:22)



Fig: 3.12 *Swisse Me*. Source (Swiss Me 2020, 0:24-0:25)

Thus, a peculiar or special feature makes the texts very interesting for the study. The pornographic angles for the food in food porn also have another interesting point to be noted.

### **3.9.6 Reading the Background Sound, Audio of the Texts**

In reference to the audio or background music in the texts i.e., *Swisse Me Smoothie* and *Food Porn App*, the non-diegetic soundtracks are used, on the other hand, ambient audios are mostly used in the sexual pornographic videos. Concerning the videos of the *Swisse Me Smoothie* and *Food Porn app*, it can be seen that the use of diegetic audio cannot give much impact on the viewers. Moreover, the soundtrack used in both the videos has a story of its own, which the researcher is conferring about in the later part of this chapter.

A brief understanding of the two categories of soundtracks refereeing above is put in the following way:

In the world of digital media categories like – films, advertisements, documentaries, and so on, image and sound synchronization only give us significant products that one can enjoy. However, the way it seems to us as a consumer of these genres, is not as simple to produce them. In reality, the sound and the moving image can both exist separately, there is a relationship between them, especially in the media. Sound can be divided into three

categories: sounds, music, and voice such as ambient sound and sound effects. Each of these kinds of sound only gives meaning to the image and the feel of it. One of the articles where a brief idea about the Diegetic and non-diegetic sounds is discussed by a scholar named Shaquilla Alexandar (2015)

Once more, sounds can either be diegetic or non-diegetic. Diegetic sounds are those that link to something visible on screen and can also be heard by the characters. This includes dialogue and the sounds of objects/things on the screen. Non-diegetic sound is, by contrast, all of the sounds that the audience hears but the characters cannot. This could be narration, ambient sound, “mood” music, and some sound effects.

The non-diegetic sound that is used by the producers of *Swisse Me Smoothie* and *Food Porn App* videos is called commentary or nonliteral sound. These sounds do not originate from within the film’s world but are added by sound editors in post-production. Some of the examples of non-diegetic sounds are –

- 1) Any film’s musical score is used to set the film’s tone, manipulate emotions, add drama, express ambiguity, or provide an element of surprise.
- 2) Sound effects are added for dramatic effect. For example, a recorded scratch sound added for comic relief is not heard by the characters in the film.
- 3) Narration or voice-over is used to help explain or reinforce the plot. (Master Class, 2021)

The idea of how audio or sound plays an important role in the films is being converse about by Darshana Sreedhar Min in her article, “‘Un-sound’ Sounds Pornosonics of Female Desire in Indian Mediascapes”.

### **3.9.6.i Swisse Me Advertisement Video and its Non-Diegetic Soundtrack**

In the Swisse Me advertisement, an important part is the whistling audio, played in the background. This background audio of the Swisse Me advertisement is a soundtrack from Cinematic Classical Music entitled *The Human Flute* composed by Ryan Taubert, the beautiful music is the result of the composition of different musical instruments along with human whistling sound. The audio *The Human Flute* is very interestingly used in the advertisement video. In the initial part of the video, the whistling is slow and gradual.

The intensity of the audio increases as it develops gradually. The intensity of the audio also matches the actions in the video the initial audio was slow so the camera showcases a slow action with the fruits. The moment the whistling audio intensifies, a fast action is matched with it, and an increase of fast rhythmic action of hands with fruits (foods) is also highlighted. The video along with the audio eventually reaches a climax or peak and after that, it slows down towards the end of the video. This action of initiation, slowly reaching the climax or peak and gradually slowing down have some resemblance to the whole portrayal of a sexual act in a pornographic film or video. Again, this video has another resemblance to the pornographic content towards its ending. This can be understood through the analysis of the whole plot of how fruits are treated with hands such as fingering, squeezing, and slow and lingering touch of the fruits, all resembling actions in sexual pornographic videos. Moreover, towards the end, there is a release of many kinds of white milk like liquids, citrus fruits liquid, red strawberry liquid, and finally, the liquid smoothie packets are being released in an upward movement flow with much intensity in the Swisse Me advertisement video.

### **3.9.6.ii The Non-Diegetic Soundtrack Used in Food Porn App**

As mentioned above, the background music or audio that goes with the culinary and visual content is usually referred to as the non-diegetic soundtrack in a Food Porn app. Without actually being a part of the culinary scene, this soundtrack aims to improve the user's experience by establishing a mood, fostering an atmosphere, or enhancing the food's sensory appeal. It is intended to increase the users of the app's enjoyment, excitement, and engagement with the content. The word "Diegetic" refers to elements that are present in the made-up world of a film or narrative in the fields of media studies and filmmaking. Diegetic elements are those that are audible to or interact with the story's characters. On the contrary, non-diegetic elements belong outside the story's world and are usually meant for the audience. The characters in the narrative are not aware of these things, like narration or background music.

The audio played in the background of the Food porn app is a song from Barry White's album titled 'Stone Gon' released in 1973 on the 20th Century label. The title of the song is 'Never, never gonna give you up' which is being used as the background audio. Barry White, a two-time Grammy Award winner, is known for his romantic image and bass-baritone voice. Moreover, the lyrics and the way the song is being sung is an

amalgamation of some seductive tunes, suggestive words, and sounds. A beautiful description of this song has been given by a writer Malibau in his article titled “‘Never, Never gonna give you up’ Barry White- Stone Gon”. Thus, using this song as the audio behind the video of the advertisement is a very smart strategy for attracting consumers in a more subtle but seductive way.

### **3.9.7 The Latent Sensuality and Sexual Symbolism of the Food Items**

The Latent Sensuality and Sexual Symbolism of the Food Items One of the chapters of Peri Bradley’s (2016, 249–250) book *Food, Media and Contemporary Culture: The Edible Image*, is “Food Porn: The Conspicuous Consumption of Food in the Age of Digital Reproduction” by Erin Metz McDonnell, suggests that the pornographic gaze towards foods can be summarized in two ways: the latent sensuality of food and the sexual symbolism of food presentation. Both the aforementioned videos contain aspects of latent sensuality as well as sexual symbolism. The term ‘latent sensuality’ refers to the food item which may materially or have intrinsically the capacity to evoke pornographic imagery such as dripping sauces or cream and vaginal or phallic-shaped foods, which are already established in various cultures as a symbolic understanding of human sensuality. Fruits such as bananas are considered a phallic symbol in most societies and, in the social media world, are mostly used as such. Strawberry fruit, when cut in half, is symbolic of a female sexual organ. Some examples from the videos such as the citrus fruit in the *Swisse Me* advertisement, where two fingers plunge deep into the fruit as the liquid gushes out, evoke a sensual and sexual image. In the final part of the *Swisse Me* advertisement, the smoothie is squeezed by a hand, which, given the whole progression of the video, may appear sexual. In the food porn app, the banana is used again, this time with a tomato half resembling a female sexual organ symbol. Other erotic symbolism includes the kneading of two white rounds of dough, a sliced.

In the final part of the *Swisse Me* advertisement, the smoothie is squeezed by a hand, which, given the whole progression of the video, may appear sexual. In the food porn app, the banana is used again, this time with a tomato half resembling a female sexual organ symbol. Other erotic symbolism includes the kneading of two white rounds of dough, a sliced watermelon, a white substance bordered by pieces of strawberry, licking of papaya with its black seeds by the bearded man, squeezed citrus fruit and plunging the whole hand into a watermelon.

In the case of the food porn app ad. Video, both latent sensuality possessing foods and enforced sexual symbolism in it can be seen. Another important part of pornographic videos is the sound, audio, and voice played in the background along with the video plays a very significant role.

### **3.10 Understanding Seducing Elements**

The healthy food porn which is being observed in the videos can be termed as a part of conscious capitalism and orthorexia as already discussed in this chapter. Conscious capitalism, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is related to the idea that capitalism is done consciously for profits as well as for serving all involved stakeholders, including employees, humanity, and the environment—not just their management teams and shareholders. So, in the circumstances of the 1st wave of covid- 19 pandemic emphasizing more on healthy food porn than on unhealthy food porn as the demand of the hour. Moreover, this conscious capitalism’s strategy can be understood as a seducing element to lure the viewers of food porn with the promise of providing nutritious, healthy, and hygienic food. Thus, this is one of the most important elements of seduction.

Another seducing element is the social construction of the sexuality of the food items. This chapter tries to focus on how these mentioned elements are the most associated with the idea of seduction. Some words on seduction and capitalism by The New Leam Staff (2021),

Now in the era of global capitalism we have moved another step forward. Beyond ‘domination’ and ‘hegemony’—we are in the realm of ‘seduction’. Today capitalism seduces us with its glitz and spectacles, its billboards and malls, its erotic symbols and lifestyle packages. As consumers we redefine ourselves; we are well-fed/well/clothed commodities in the marketplace; and the market enters everywhere—even in our bed rooms. Possibly, Marx , because of his historic location in the 19th century, could not visualize the shape of late capitalism. However, the new generation of thinkers influenced by Marx—the thinkers like Herbert Marcuse and Zygmunt Bauman—have given us the insights

into this spectacle. In fact, these days, as a look at contemporary India would suggest, all three practices—domination, hegemony, and seduction—surround our existence. A ‘Maoist’ professor has to be sent to jail, and the ‘dissenters’ are bound to be killed in the ‘encounters. Again, the IITs and IIMs have to be sanctified because of their ability to spread the hegemony—the ability to normalize and sanctify the logic of competition, achievement, success, and ‘efficiency’ of corporate capitalism. Simultaneously, there is great ‘fun’ with fancy gadgets, shopping, and conspicuous consumption, and the beauty industry!

### **3.11 A Reading of Lacanian Gaze in Context of the Swisse Me and the Food Porn App Advertisement Videos**

The videos, when analyzed from the Lacanian point of view, it can be said that these videos try to make the audiences feel a lack, as the videos progress and the audiences continue watching the videos felt that finally fills the lack.

#### **3.11.1 Gaze on healthy food porn**

Like in the case of anamorphosis paintings as discussed by Lacan in his book *The Seminar Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1998, 102-103) the viewers or the audiences of the paintings always know that some element will be there which captures the eye and consciousness, however, when the moment comes, losing the gaze is inevitable. Same applies to the healthy food porn videos’ text of this attempt. More appropriately, in regards to the Swisse Me video, where the makers along with the video also released a brief note on how their video incorporates healthy food porn. Nevertheless, the audiences or the viewers in a way are lost in the gaze of the vision of healthy food and food porn.

In the words of Maria Scott, she talks about Lacan’s *Ambassador* painting and the distorted figure of the skull,

It is between the eye and the gaze. According to Lacan, ‘there is no coincidence, but, on the contrary, a lure.’Lacan says about our relation to the real, ‘The appointment is always missed.’ He

evokes the discordance between eye and gaze with the phrase ‘what I look at is never what I wish to see.’ The moment of losing the gaze, the initial ‘moment of seeing, for example, the moment of perceiving the skull in Holbein’s painting, the subject becomes closest, and it can get to an awareness of the gaze, because while the gaze is present to that subject, then the ego is not. The gaze is, in other words, irretrievably lost to the eye, and ‘I,’ of the subject. (Scott, 2015)

The fact that food porn is often perceived as something associated with unhealthy foodstuff, hence, showcasing healthy foods in the place of unhealthy food itself can be perceived as the distorted figure of the angled skull. Moreover, the pornographic angle applied to the “healthy foods” is something challenging as well as attracting the gaze to be lost. Another point that can be discussed here is the paranoia of scarcity and paranoia of healthy food as discussed earlier in this chapter with reference to Clemens Apprich’s (2018, 117) the idea of a paranoid machine. During the lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were fearful of the coronavirus-related diseases and their consequences. Among the consequences of the disease, the lockdown worldwide, food scarcity, and the demand for healthy and hygienic food increased to win over the virus. So, when viewers are seeing healthy, hygienic, and delicious as well as excessive foods in the videos (Ads of Swisse Me and Food Porn App), it is something that can be compared to the distorted figure of the skull of The Ambassadors painting. In Lacan’s analysis of Hans Holbein’s 1533 painting, The Ambassadors, the gaze is held by the distorted shape of the skull in the foreground of the painting. This skull in the painting is not easily visible in the first place, yet it is enough to provoke the viewers to look back at it as before leaving the room, thereby clearly perceiving, for the first time, the angled skull. In the case of both the advertisement videos, the aspects of healthy food porn can be seen as the distorted skull, due to the fact that everywhere the lack of food or food scarcity is the prime concern along with the boosting immunity concern (the healthy food). Nishant Shah, as discussed in his article, during this period, capitalism used this paranoia of scarcity (2020, 101) to compensate for the emptiness with the idea that there is everywhere availability of food with nutrition in it which helps them fight the disease. Moreover, the same notion goes for the idea of healthy and hygienic eating.



Through the videos, the creators use the fear of scarcity and disease as something lacking and at the same time provide the pleasure of being safe within the video. It can be understood in the following way too. The researcher depicts the scarcity of food and fear of disease as something the distorted figure of the skull because it is something that attracts the attention of the viewers and at the same time makes the viewers feel as if being looked back by the skull. This feeling of looking back at the skull makes the viewers of the paintings unconsciously hold their gaze. Likewise, in the case of the videos the viewers are unconsciously involved and diving into the pleasure of being safe and secure from the lack of the surroundings.

### **3.12 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter looks at the phenomenon of food porn marketing through the medium of visual media representation. The chapter also examines how food porn was projected through the food vlogs during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the healthy narrative. Food porn is not a new concept. Throughout history, food and sexual enticement have been seen as closely connected areas. Though the discussion of the relationship between food and sexual enticement has been held many times every time the ways and variations change, understanding of which is necessary to get a brief idea of how our society works.

Moreover, it is true that healthy food porn is a surface-level concept, its existence is paradoxical. However, to know and understand the nature of working of the dominant force capitalism and its various manifestations like food porn and its influence in society is necessary for study. In other words, it can be seen that, like in the case of Freud's iceberg theory, to go and to know as deep as the iceberg, the surface-level understanding is significant. Therefore, a similar case also applies to the concept of healthy food porn, though it is a surface-level concept, in order to know the deep workings of food porn, healthy food porn is also significant for a researcher.

In this chapter, food porn is not discussed for the sake of discussing only the idea of food porn, rather it has been tried to understand how some significant aspects of media and technologically enhanced society work together. And that is also discussed in a simple way.

Another important aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic enhanced food porn can be seen as the market utilizing two aspects, one the present situational element i.e., healthy and immunity-boosting foods as the base along with the other being the evergreen business idea of food porn, the inclusion of a pornographic presentation in it. This amalgamation of ideas is nothing but the popular strategy of using the status quo maintaining the patriarchal system and the profit-earning capitalist business. Food porn and its association with healthy food is not a new trend and can be seen prior to the covid-19 pandemic. However, the researcher is inclined to focus on the Covid-19 pandemic times as the context of analysis, because in this particular time immunity boosting, healthy food eating, etc are found to be prominent and that aspect was projected in the food porn vlogs.

Another aspect is that capitalism's manifested food porn can be understood from the lens of scarcity of food, hunger, starvation, and poverty. For this chapter, the researcher mainly deals with the association of food porn's association with the luxurious excessiveness of entities. The luxurious excessiveness of entities means that one of the characteristics of food porn is, it is always having an association with the availability of entities (the food) in excess. This characteristic is as popular as the notion of food porn as unhealthy. According to Uku Tooming (2021, 127-128), "The popularity of an image tends to correlate the extent to which it depicts culinary excesses, especially high-calorie foods". Mallari and Kerner (2017, 8) also commented in the same light, "The excessive recipes contained in the junk food serve as a form of intensity, providing the consumer with highly concentrated flavours from the food and, in turn, a more intense sensorial stimulation of taste..... Much like how sexual pornography overloads the eyes with emphasized sexual performance to evoke arousal, food porn overloads the mouth with excessive flavours of sugar and fat." Moreover, food porn always has a luxurious identity in it. In food porn, food is always presented in a way that even ordinary, common, everyday food also look very stylish or exotic which is enough to seduce to one's hunger. In addition to this, the real exotic food itself gets a special place in the food porn platter as already discussed in the previous chapters. Thus, food porn along with the popular identity of unhealthiness, is known for its luxurious and excessive availability of entities (the food). The practical picture of this popular notion of food porn is being explored and examined in the successive chapter. To put this statement in the following way, after understanding this aspect of food porn's association with luxuriousness and

excessiveness of food, along with the healthy trend. In contrast to this characteristic, another perspective needs to be addressed, whether food porn has any relation to poverty, hunger and starvation, is the prime consideration for the next chapter.

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