



Food Simulacra in Phenomenon of Uploading Food Photos on Instagram

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Abstract

This study reveals phenomenon of uploading photo in social media as part of lifestyle of eating out. In present time, taking food photo before being consumed is familiar for urban people. By using the qualitative approach, this study tried to reveal phenomenon of uploading photo in Instagram with post human perspective, which technology has exceeded the real life of human being. In this study, post human referred in the use of Jean Baudrillard's concept about simulation and simulacra. Simulation was derivative model of real thing without origin, whereas simulacra was camouflage method of a sign that disrupted the reality. In this research, simulation and simulacra in phenomenon of taking photo/picture was called as food simulacra. Food simulacra was represented when the food was served. The finding of this study showed that food simulacra conducted by uploader food photo in Instagram presented post-human condition, in which photo uploader wanted to show existence in social media.

Keywords: Simulation, Simulacra, Post-Human, Food Simulacra, Instagram, Food Photo.

Introduction

Development of information and communication technology contain almost of all human activity change. One of activities that becomes shifted due to social media was eating activity. Eating is the most primary needs in human life (Widyosiswoyo, 1991). Human consumes food to complete primary needs. For urban people, eating out is not rarely found. Based on the research of Hartman Group (2012) in United States, social media changes big part of human habits, including eating activity. Appearance of social media makes consumers more like to search information about new food or restaurant through pictures in social media. Research of Hartman Group also explains that social media and food are perfect match. The result of survey shows that 32% consumers use social media while eating or drinking. That percentage even increases became 47% in



millennial people (Hartman Group, 2012). Consumers like to share their eating experience by uploading food photos or activities while eating in social media.

Proximity between social media and eating activity is in line with the research result of Fitria (2015) about behavior of eating beautifully (*makan cantik*) in Senopati, Jakarta. When *makan cantik* is done, individual presented eating activity in social media to form high class identity. Food Photos uploaded in social media also have interesting view inspired taste. This statement also in line with the research of Raditya (2014) in the year before, that they who consume food with aesthetic and interesting view tend to consider as high class people. In this case, social media is a place to show the eating activity, so that eating activity has had a shift in meaning.

Social media which is popular enough to share photos is Instagram. Based on the result of APJII (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers) survey about the data of internet users' behavior in Indonesia in 2016, Instagram was in second place after Facebook as social media that was the most frequently accessed. It is different from Facebook, Instagram is social media that has specific feature to share photos and videos of users' daily activities. Through Instagram, individual can upload food photos which have interesting view and tantalize, so that it can be categorized as Insta-worthy or Instagramable food (things that are appropriate to upload in Instagram). In present, it is not rarely found Instagram accounts themed about food, especially in Jakarta. An Instagram account with the username of @jktfooddestination currently has 792.000 followers, @jktfoodbang account has 628.000 followers, account of @anakjajan has 302.000 followers and others. The numbers of follower of those accounts are not small. It shows that interest toward trend food and food that has interesting view and inspired taste is high for people. Those accounts of food make the habit of taking pictures before eating becomes popular in urban people. In addition, it appears the term of foodies, that is people who have interest to search and eat delicious and interesting food (Johnston and Bauman, 2015; 48).

Phenomenon of people who like uploading food photos in social media such as Instagram makes the meaning of eating become shifted. In fact, eating is primary needs of human to be able to survive. Type of food with variation view technology development make eating activity is not only for completing the hunger, but the activity to represent certain class, from food view or brand of the restaurant.

Literature Review

This study used idea of Jean Baudrillard about simulation and simulacra as sequence of process toward hyperreal. Simulation is as derivative model or object from a real thing without origin or real, or it is called as hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1994:1). Eventually, representation process of simulated object could change the object. The opposite of simulation is dissemblance or dissimulation, in which in dissemblance, it can be



distinguished clearly between the real and the fake. The difference between simulation and the real reality becomes unclear because simulation serves imagination space that is like reality. Besides, real model that is generated by simulation is not the real, but it hides the reality. Conclusive evidence in simulation disappears and it is replaced by signs that are revealed in form of model without reference. Then it replaces the reality. The play of signs will replace the real reality. Those signs complete each other so that they can't be separated in forming new reality that does not have reference. This new reality is unclear and making the reality becomes unclear. Then it is called as simulacra and simulacrum.

In the stage of simulation, sign which is simulated still refer to represent the real object. However, in simulacra stage, a sign does not refer to the real reality anymore, even though it still represents the real object. As Baudrillard said in his book, that "Simulacra never hides the truth, but the truth hides that there is no truth (Baudrillard, 1981:9). Simulacra is a method or step of camouflage toward sign or image which rotates tick marks become chaos in representation process (Baudrillard, 1994:1). In its development, simulation and simulacra are divided become 3 periods of history (Baudrillard, 1994:83). three periods or orders as follow:

1. First order (contrefaçon/contrefait)

This first order simulacra refers to Renaissance era until the beginning of Industry Revolution. In this order, reality was presented as it was and created over harmony and natural principles. Simulacra in this era was a natural thing, it can be found in the image, imitation/replica and fake goods. Therefore, simulacra in this first order was very easy to distinguish between the real and the fake.

2. Second order (Production)

This second order of simulacra occurred at the same time with the development of industrial era. Industrial that occurred in this era made the representation that referred to reality become shifted. Representation of reality eventually cover its reality due to production and reproduction process. In this second order, simulacra was a productive thing, in which machine took over all production system. In the end, technology advance can replace object transcendence character. Object could easily produced in mass and fast so it relieved the distant between real object and fake object.

3. Third Order (Simulation)

Third order is connected with 20th century, in which simulacra was consequence from the development of knowledge and information technology, global communication, capitalism that formed consumerism culture. Simulacra in this third order is simulacra from simulation, in which sign and image dominated and tried to show real thing. Reality did not exist because it was mixed and disguised so that we can't identify whether it is real or fake.

From the three orders, it can be seen that simulacra is a process. At the beginning, simulacra just produced concrete object or event. However, simulacra slowly cover



reality until it misleads the reality. Eventually, simulacra does not represent anything in reality. Simulacra only refers in itself and becomes 'the end of real meaning.' (Baudrillard, 1994:11). Perfect Simulacra is when it can't be distinguished anymore between reality and fake/imitation. Based on Baudrillard (1994:2), in the world of this postmodern, we have not questioned anymore which one is real, imitation, duplication or parodi, but the signs have become reality.

Research Methodology

This study used qualitative approach. Based on Creswell (2010:3), qualitative research was approach that explored and understood the meaning of individuals or groups who were considered that they came from social or humanity problem. Qualitative approach was characterized by social construction over reality and cultural meaning, in which authenticity is the key of this approach. Qualitative approach was considered good to use in this research because qualitative approach tried to probe subjective reality from individuals' experience that like to take picture about food then uploaded to social media Instagram. Collecting the data was conducted by depth interviewing and observation toward four informants, in which all informant is top foodographers and they often upload food photos in their Instagram accounts. After that, the data will be analyzed thematically by categorizing through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Result and Discussion

Eating out is familiar for urban people in Indonesia. Phenomenon of eating out is not only for completing needs to eat, but it is as activity to preserving culture of the class (Ansori, 2009). It becomes relevant when there was informant who said that he interpreted eating out as lifestyle. In other word, eating out was not only activity to fulfill hunger, but also it is for hanging out. While, there was informant who visited restaurant to fulfill the needs of food. However, the selection of place to eat was not carelessly because there was informant who liked coffee shop or restaurant with the reason of healthy and clean rather than eating in cafeteria or canteen. It represented that eating out was not only eating, but there was prestige to distinguish social class.

The finding of the research showed that research subject chose food and restaurant related to social class. For example, Plataran restaurant in Central Jakarta as one of informant choices to eat was a restaurant which could be categorized as classy restaurant. The location was in elite place, the price of the food in menu were not cheap. According to researcher, the choice of restaurant and menu were related how informant wanted to be seen in the context of status symbol based on what they consumed.

Baudrillard (1998) revealed that there was principle to maximize existence to obtain enjoyment from consumed object. Consumption, in this case encouraged individual to become individualist to fulfill desire and needs. In general, culture of eating out from all

informant showed the behavior to maximize existence, especially through Instagram. However, practice of food consumption was not always conducted alone. Almost all informant liked doing culinary together with their friends to get more photos to show in social media with less cost because of sharing cost. When the photos had been taken, the last execution to uploaded and maximized existence through Instagram that were done individually.

Food Simulacra: Makes Ordinary become Extraordinary

Food simulacra in this research referred to simulation and simulacra that played role when taking picture and it is manipulated. As it explained by Baudrillard (1994:1), simulation was a derivative model or object from real thing without origin, or it was called as hyperreal. Simulation is not dissemblance, but it exaggerated the condition. Based on data of finding, research subject tent to organize food so it was interesting to take. It is related to framework of Baudrillard, organizing food to make interesting while taking was part of simulation. It was done by an informant who organized his food and drink to become artistic while taking photos. After doing food presentation, simulation was also seen when informant showed hand or taking the food to make it more interesting. Whereas, food was not that beautiful as they presented.



Figure 1: One of the informants arranged the food and then took the photo

It is different from dissemblance/dissimulation, which was done by informants to present food was not activity of pretending to eat. Informant eat that food, but they did simulation as if the condition they took as photos were the real ones. Presenting food and drink neatly, artistic and supported by atmosphere and the place to take photos to make it more classy.

Simulation was not only showed by presenting ordered food, but also how the condition when informants ate out. All informant had friends in doing culinary. By eating together, informants obtained more photos of food and drink with less cost rather than they ate alone. It showed that food photos which were taken was not necessarily food they bought.



Based on the explanation above, simulation and reality can become unclear because it creates an imagination space as if it is real. It showed that signs fulfilled each other so taken photos could form new reality. In taking food photos, those signs were about brand, serve presentation, until the environment that supported pseudo reality. It was reflected when informant said that food brand needed to showed as identity of the food.

Beside, the equipment affected the effort in simulation during taking photos. Informants who used better camera had more effort in doing simulation so they obtained photos with better quality. Eventually, representation from taking photo was like exaggerating condition then the real condition. In other word, simulation did not change the real model, but it hided reality because they took photo as best as they could.

As the orders of process, Baudrillard revealed that signs in simulation steps had represented real object. Whereas in simulacra stage, signs did not refer to the rality, even though it represented the real object. In food photos, editing process done by research subject before uploading was simulacra process which disrupted representation of the real eating activity. Through editing process, informants could edited food photo that they took to looked more classy and aesthetic. Raditya (2014) in his research explained that they who consumed aesthetic and interesting presentation of food tent to be considered as classy people. Therefore, last execution when upoading the photos in social media was social class representation through consumed food. By consuming food which presented aesthetic and interesting, symbol of individual's status could be seen that he/she was classy individual.

Based of the finding of the research, it was seen that informants who had high effort in taking photo of food did not need to edit photos that they uploaded. Whereas, informant who had less effort in taking photo of food tent to relay on editing process so that they generated more aesthetic photos. It was reflected when one of the informant revealed that he had several steps in editing photos of coffee he took to have the same white impression. Activity of editing photos made the photos were like the reality, that food photos were aesthetic and classy food.

Development of this simulacra was divided into three history periods, as it was revealed by Baudrillard (1994:83). First order was related to reality reflection which was represent as the reality, second order was related to production and reproduction which covered reality and third order showed mixed signs and images so it negated the reality. Related to simulacra created from simulation result and editing food photos, eventually, aesthetic and classy impression that informants wanted to show through the photos did not represent anything ecause after buffeted by simulation and simulacra which disrupted reality of eating activity.

Conclusion

The appearance of new media such as Instagram makes people become easier to obtain information from around the world. Media showed various lifestyle then it spread



and can be imitated. Phenomenon of uploading food photos in Instagram shows that photo uploader is doing simulation of lifestyle, that is ideal lifestyle for those as middle class as the upload through social media of Instagram. Based on the findings and discussion, food simulacra practice in taking food photo then uploading in social media of Instagram means that uploader wants to reach existence in virtual world, which is Instagram. This practice show the post-human condition in which the uploaders wants to achieve something virtually. Uploaders of food photos in this research were foodgraphers. As foodographers, their existence in culinary world is known through their photos they upload in Instagram. Cyberspace, in this case has become virtual reality for food photos uploaders. Instagram as one of cyberspaces is a virtual reality to upload food photos to show uploaders' existence. Someone who is called as foodgrapher shows new place to eat, new menu and trend food. Therefore, food photos they upload in Instagram were ones of efforts done by individual to maintain their existence in virtual reality. In this case, Instagram is space that offers the users to show various lifestyles. Foodographers choose to show their food they consume as their lifestyle which they want to show in Instagram. When the foodographers predicate dissappear, they are only ordinary people. Interestingly, cyberspace such as Instagram makes all this thing becomes possible.

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