Deconstructing the Iilusion of Shopeefood Advertisements Through Simulacra Theory of Indonesian Main Course

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Abstract
This study explores the application of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and hyperreality in the analysis of ShopeeFood digital advertisements. The research aims to examine how food imagery, promotional language, and consumer experiences in these ads construct a hyperreal representation that blurs the line between reality and simulation. Using a qualitative content analysis method, the study investigates selected ShopeeFood video advertisements from social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. The findings reveal that ShopeeFood ads do not merely promote food delivery services but construct a simulated consumer desire through idealized visuals, exaggerated discounts, and emotional storytelling. These elements detach the advertised content from the real experience of ordering and consuming food, instead creating a hyperreality where the image becomes more "real" than reality itself. This research highlights the significance of digital advertising ethics and the need for critical consumer awareness in the postmodern media landscape, where simulations often dominate perceptions of consumption.
Keywords: Shopeefood, Simulacra, Hyperreality, Jean Baudrillard, Digital Advertising, Consumer Perception

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and digitalization has transformed the way humans interact, including in terms of food consumption. One prominent phenomenon is the emergence of online food delivery platforms like ShopeeFood. These platforms not only make it easier for consumers to order food without leaving their homes but also provide access to various restaurants and menus that might have been difficult to reach physically. However, behind this convenience lies an intriguing dynamic worth exploring further, particularly regarding the representation of food in digital advertisements and consumer perceptions. Jean Baudrillard, in his theory of simulacra, explains that in the postmodern era, reality is often replaced by symbols and signs that no longer refer to the original reality but instead to hyperreality—a reality constructed by simulation. This phenomenon can be observed in the context of food advertisements on platforms like ShopeeFood. These advertisements display images of food that look extremely appealing, perfect, and mouthwatering. However, these images are often nothing more than simulations—representations far removed from the actual food consumers will receive. The main issue that arises is the gap between expectations and reality. Consumers, exposed to hyperrealistic advertising images, tend to assume that the food they order will match what they see on their screens. However, in reality, the food that arrives often does not align with these depictions, whether in terms of appearance, quality, or quantity. This leads to disappointment and even a sense of being deceived among consumers. Yet, these advertisements are merely simulations—representations constructed to attract buyers, not accurate depictions of the products being offered.

This phenomenon not only affects consumer experiences but also raises ethical questions regarding advertising practices in the digital age. Is it ethical to display images of food that are far from reality? What impact does this have on consumer trust in the platform and the associated restaurants? Furthermore, how can Baudrillard's theory of simulacra help us understand this dynamic? This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of food advertisements on ShopeeFood through the lens of Baudrillard's simulacra theory. By understanding how simulation and hyperreality operate in the context of digital advertising, we hope to identify their impact on consumer perceptions and satisfaction, as well as provide recommendations for more transparent and responsible advertising practices. Based on the background described, the research questions in this study are:

1. What is the impact of the gap between advertisement representations and the reality of food on consumer perceptions and satisfaction?
2. How Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra explain the gap between the representation of food advertisements on ShopeeFood and the reality of the food received by consumers?

This study aims to analyze the representation of food in ShopeeFood advertisements and how these representations influence consumer perceptions. It also seeks to apply Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra to understand the phenomenon of hyperreality in digital food advertising and to identify the impact of the gap between advertisement portrayals and the actual food received on consumer experiences and satisfaction. The expected benefits of this research are categorized into theoretical, practical, and social contributions. Theoretically, this study provides a deeper understanding of the application of Baudrillard's simulacra theory within the context of digital advertising, particularly food advertisements on online platforms, and contributes to the academic literature on how hyperreality in advertising affects consumer behavior. Practically, it offers insights for ShopeeFood and its partner restaurants to enhance transparency in food advertising and reduce the disparity between consumer expectations and reality, while also offering recommendations for consumers to critically evaluate digital food advertisements and manage their expectations. Socially, the research aims to raise public awareness about the implications of digital advertising practices and promote a more ethical and responsible advertising environment, ultimately fostering greater consumer trust in online food delivery platforms.

Theoritical Framework
Semiotica

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, plays a crucial role in linguistics and human communication. It encompasses various modalities beyond speech, including images, sounds, and gestures (Bateson, 1968). Linguistic semiotics explores the theoretical foundations and major issues in this field, establishing it as an independent discipline (Wang, 2020). The integration of semiotics and linguistics has led to innovative approaches, such as sociolinguistic research based on indexicality and the synthesis of cognitive linguistics and semiotics (Ohridski, 2020). While some linguistic theories, such as Blending Theory, draw from semiotic ideas without explicit acknowledgment, there is a growing recognition of the value of overtly adopting semiotics in linguistics to enhance our understanding of language and communication (Ohridski, 2020; Bateson, 1968).

Simulacra

The concept of simulacra, introduced by Baudrillard (1981), refers to signs that dissimulate the absence of reality, marking a shift toward simulation where distinctions between truth and falsehood blur. This idea has been explored in literature, with Borges' works

operating within the second-order simulacrum (Boulter, 2001). In business education, simulacra are used as provocative techniques to affect actors' subjectivity, entangling business subjects' subconscious with figures of business reality (Olsen & Abildgaard, 2022). The influence of simulacra extends to various media forms, including literature, science fiction, and film, where they shape representations of American culture and identity (Kraus & Auer, 2000). These studies collectively highlight how simulacra permeate multiple aspects of society, from cultural representations to educational practices, challenging traditional notions of reality and authenticity in an increasingly mediated world.

Food Advertisement

Food advertisements and media representations have evolved into simulacra, detached from reality and creating hyperreal experiences. The visualization of food in advertisements produces a simulated reality that can confuse people's value systems and detach them from actual experiences (Zhang Dian-yuan, 2010). As food images rise in prominence, they reflect not reality but a simulacrum, influencing human-food relationships (Lee, 2014). This phenomenon extends to social media, where uploading food photos represents a posthuman condition, with users seeking to establish their existence through digital representations. In television cooking shows, food has become an impersonal, decontextualized component, carefully staged for media consumption (Viviani, 2015). These simulacra of food in various media forms have surpassed reality, shaping people's perceptions and behaviors around food while distancing them from authentic experiences.

Shopee food

Recent studies have examined factors influencing repurchase intention and purchase decisions on ShopeeFood, a food delivery service launched by e-commerce platform Shopee. Performance expectancy, habit, impulse buying tendency, and present orientation positively impact repurchase intention, while congruity to self-image has a negative effect (Kezia Christine & Berlianto, 2022). Digital marketing, service quality, and ease of transaction have been found to affect purchase decisions both partially and simultaneously (Susanto & Alexander, 2023). Additionally, electronic word-of-mouth and perceived ease of use play significant roles in purchase intention, with brand image mediating their effects (Jokhu & Rahmawati, 2022). These findings highlight the various factors that contribute to consumer behavior on ShopeeFood, providing insights for the platform to enhance its competitiveness in the online food delivery market.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive-analytical design to examine the representation of food in ShopeeFood advertisements and how it aligns with consumer experiences. Through a qualitative content analysis of user-generated reviews and comments on the ShopeeFood application, the research explores consumer perceptions and the influence of hyperrealistic advertising on satisfaction. Data is collected by selecting a sample of ten popular restaurants and food items advertised on ShopeeFood, extracting relevant user reviews and comments that address the appearance, quality, or quantity of the food compared to advertisements, and filtering out irrelevant content. The analysis involves coding the reviews based on recurring themes such as discrepancies in food appearance, quality issues, and portion size complaints; categorizing the data into broader themes including visual representation, consumer expectations, and dissatisfaction; and interpreting the findings using Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra to understand the effects of hyperreality in digital food advertising. The

ShopeeFood application serves as the primary research instrument, supported by a coding framework tailored to the research objectives. However, this study is limited by its reliance on ShopeeFood reviews, which may not capture the full range of consumer experiences, and by its focus on a single platform, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data

Case	Advertised Food Image	Actual Food Image	Consumer Comments
	Pecel with lots of peanut sauce, plenty of bean sprouts, and a fresh vegetables.	Pecel with a little peanut sauce, a small amount of bean sprouts, and mostly vegetables	"Apaan nih sayur pecel, ini mah daun ubi namanya. Ga sesuai gambar!"
	Ayam penyet with large chicken pieces, a good amount of tofu and tempeh, fresh tomatoes, and lots of tasty chili sauce.	Ayam penyet with small chicken pieces, small tofu and tempeh, a bit of tomato, and a little chili sauce.	"Beli ayam penyet aja harga 19, ekspetasi banget bakal besar full 1 ekor paha atas, ini malah dapat ginian mana tempe sama tahu nya se-uprit. Ga jelas"
	Ayam Geprek complete with cucumber slices, tomato slices, sambal and tofu and tempeh.	Showing a little bit of the chili sauce	"kek ga niat jualan ini nasinya kayak nasi kucing sambalnya seupil" "Cabe dikit, cumi kecil, seriusan?"

Nasi Telur Dadar Bakar Sambal Cumi

Nasi + oseng cumi + telur dadar bakar bakar + sambal master + sambal ijo + gorengan selada

The image depicts a variety of dishes complete with green chili, large squid, vegetables, and high-quality meat.

In reality, the image shows only a small amount of chili and small squid.

The image shows high quality and edible ingredients, such as meatballs, sambal, and soft noodles

In reality, however, the noodles appear raw and not properly prepared.

"Mienya keras nggak Direndamatau direbus, mohon lebih Ditingkatkan lagi la kualitas jualanya."

The image presents appetizing dishes such as grilled meat, fluffy rice, sambal, tofu, and tempeh

In reality, the rice used is of poor quality, and the sambal is watery and bitter

"Nasik keras gak layak makan, sambel cair dan pahit, tolong diperbaiki lagi kualitas makanan untuk harga segitu, saya gapernah ngasij rate jelek untuk makanan tapi ini benar benar tidak sesuai."

"Tidak ada indomie nya"

Indicates if the advertising image does not match the original

	The picture shows Ayam geprek with noodles, cucumber, tomato and egg.	The reality is that there are no noodles and only rice	
	Good-looking fish pepes rice with the right color and doneness, and plenty of chili sauce.	The fish is not as drawn, burnt and different in size, color and appearance.	"masak pepesnya kek arang gini….kesal bangetlah"
	Chicken porridge complete with peanuts, eggs, crackers, shredded chicken, and an appetizing gravy	Reality of a picture that has no sauce and no porridge instead of rice	"Ini bubur apa nasi"
	The picture shows Chicken Soto Rice with plenty of sauce, egg, lime and shredded chicken.	The picture shows little gravy and only bean sprouts with a little shredded chicken and no egg.	"Ga Worthit"

Findings

The findings of this study reveal a significant gap between the representation of food in ShopeeFood advertisements and the reality experienced by consumers. This gap, analyzed through the lens of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, highlights the pervasive role of hyperreality in shaping consumer expectations and perceptions. The advertisements on ShopeeFood, characterized by vibrant colors, perfect arrangements, and generous portions, create a simulated reality that often diverges from the actual food delivered to consumers. This phenomenon aligns with Baudrillard's concept of third-order simulacra, where representations no longer refer to an original reality but instead construct a new, idealized reality that becomes more real than reality itself.

The hyperrealistic nature of these advertisements has profound implications for consumer behavior. When consumers are exposed to idealized images of food, they develop high expectations regarding the quality, appearance, and quantity of the products. However,

the reality often falls short of these expectations, leading to disappointment, frustration, and a sense of being misled. For instance, while advertisements may depict dishes with abundant toppings and perfect presentation, the actual food received may have smaller portions, less appealing presentation, or lower quality. This misalignment between expectation and reality not only affects individual consumer experiences but also raises broader questions about the ethical implications of hyperrealistic advertising in the digital age. From a theoretical perspective, this study underscores the relevance of Baudrillard's theory of simulacra in understanding contemporary digital advertising practices. The concept of hyperreality provides a useful framework for analyzing how visual representations in digital platforms like ShopeeFood shape consumer perceptions and behaviors. By creating idealized images that simulate reality, these advertisements construct a new reality that consumers accept as truth, even when it diverges from their actual experiences. This process of simulation and hyperreality is particularly evident in the context of food advertising, where visual appeal plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for platforms like ShopeeFood and their partner restaurants. To reduce the gap between advertisement representations and reality, it is essential to adopt more transparent and responsible advertising practices. This could include using realistic images that accurately depict the food, providing detailed descriptions of portion sizes and ingredients, and encouraging restaurants to maintain consistency in food preparation and presentation. Additionally, platforms could introduce features such as user-generated photos or real-time reviews to help consumers set more realistic expectations. On a broader level, this study highlights the need for consumer awareness about the nature of digital advertising. By understanding the role of hyperreality and simulation in shaping their perceptions, consumers can become more critical in evaluating advertisements and managing their expectations. This, in turn, can lead to more informed decision-making and greater satisfaction with their purchases. In conclusion, ShopeeFood operates primarily within the realm of third-order simulacra, where its advertisements create hyperrealistic representations of food that shape consumer expectations. While these representations are effective in attracting consumers, they often lead to a gap between expectation and reality, resulting in dissatisfaction and distrust. By addressing this gap through more transparent advertising practices and greater consumer awareness, platforms like ShopeeFood can enhance consumer trust and create a more ethical and satisfying digital marketplace.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be discussed that the representation of food in ShopeeFood advertisements, which is hyperrealistic in nature, reflects the phenomenon of third-order simulacra as described by Jean Baudrillard, where images no longer represent objective reality but instead construct a new reality that becomes more dominant than the actual one. This indicates that in the context of digital advertising, particularly on food delivery platforms, the idealized visuals presented do not merely serve as promotional tools but also function as constructions of reality that significantly influence consumer perceptions and expectations. The gap between the expectations shaped by advertisements and the actual food received leads to negative consumer experiences such as disappointment and distrust toward the platform. This discussion also emphasizes the importance of ethics in digital advertising practices, which require transparency and accuracy in product representation. Therefore, strategic measures are needed from both the platform and partner restaurants to minimize this gap, such as using realistic food images, incorporating user-generated photos, and providing detailed and honest product descriptions. More broadly, these findings highlight the urgency of

enhancing consumers' digital literacy so they can critically evaluate visual content in advertisements and build more proportional expectations toward the services offered.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented, it can be concluded that ShopeeFood advertisements create hyperrealistic representations of food, which excessively shape consumer expectations regarding the quality, appearance, and portion size of the meals. Through the lens of Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, this phenomenon demonstrates how advertising has surpassed actual reality, resulting in a gap between consumer expectations and real experiences. This gap negatively impacts user satisfaction, leads to disappointment, and threatens trust in the platform. Therefore, it is essential for ShopeeFood and its partner restaurants to implement more ethical and transparent advertising practices, while also encouraging consumers to develop critical awareness of digital content. These efforts are expected to foster more realistic, satisfying, and sustainable consumption experiences within the digital marketplace ecosystem.

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