

From Spectacle to Sanctuary: A Sensory Ethnography of Cultural Discount Negotiation in Three Typologies of YouTube Food Shorts

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Abstract. In this paper, the author examines the theoretical application of multisensory rhetoric by YouTube food shorts to surpass the symbolic limits of the traditional phenomenon. With digital sensory ethnography, it explores three archetypes, including Chef Wang (professional performance), Pasta Grannies (familial tradition), and Emojoie (minimalist aesthetics). The social media algorithmic growth has re-scaled the way users perceive cultural discounting, with the research concept being transferred to the intuitive sensory bargaining. Although the role of compensatory sensorial experiences in overcoming cultural differences is rarely mentioned, it has an impact on the influencer economy and platform which are often talked about. This process is triggered by sensory ethnography. This research dismantles the audiovisual design by using more than 2,000 comments of the viewer and consists of three patterns of sensory compensation used by Chef Wang to turn cultural barriers into transnational visual spectacle: "surgery precision in food art saves the appearance of the world of food culture; Pasta Grannies evokes universal nostalgia over the hometown, family, and heritage by using the aesthetic symbol of the home stove; and Emojoie visually presents cooking as a meditating product, meeting the relaxation needs of the audience and a tranquility. This paper shows that the existence of such differences of cultures in short-form video media is a dynamic variable with the mediation through the audience affective negotiation. As a result, it establishes a new framework of theoretical knowledge about cross-cultural communication of user-generated content (UGC), which provides practitioners with insights and advice.

Keywords: cultural discount negotiation, sensory compensation, digital sensory ethnography, YouTube food shorts, typology of sensory affect

1. Introduction

Social media generally offers a wide range of life forms through content published by users [1]. Through the wave of creating the new media, in the last several years, the social media enterprises, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram quickly gained momentum as the main distributors of information in the world. These emerging types of social media give the users avenues through which to exchange their interests and life. Video material, namely its main topics,

plot settings, and verbal indicators, can be used to provide an accurate depiction of the culture, trendiness, and ideals of particular geographical areas.

The continuous changes experienced on the digital platforms such as YouTube have redefined the way in which individuals relate to information [2], giving them more autonomy in communication. The accelerated development of algorithmic content curation process has transformed the natural processes of cross-cultural communication, reinventing the world exchange patterns. Short videos have changed the everyday media consumption patterns of the audience into an automatic sensory discovery [3]. Although culinary cultures may vary in different countries, the interest of the population in and love of food are universal. The YouTube audience feels the difference in tastes deeply in the global kitchen: the roar of the fire in a Chinese dining by a wok; the feel of a dough kneading in a family Italian kitchen; the accurate, restorative aesthetics of a Japanese pastry kitchen.

This is a process driven by sensory cues. These brief food films communicate not the cooking techniques, but a carefully crafted multi-sensory experience [4,5]. The audiovisual model is the challenge to the traditional notion of cultural discount [6], a theory founded on the economic deficit idea of international media trade suggesting that cultural products become underestimated in foreign markets because of a difference between the cultures. Nevertheless, the popularity of these stylistically varied food videos across the world reveals an obvious theoretical paradox: in short videos where the algorithm is amalgamated with consumer preferences, how is the cultural discount effect being redesigned?

Even though others are focusing on platform functionality or user identity to overcome symbolic barriers, they only provide rich but partial descriptions. Earlier studies have been concerned with the issue of how platform properties and recommendation systems identify traditional cultural barriers [7,8], or the economic gains of so-called influencer economies that facilitate insights via exotic identities [9]. Others emphasize the fusion of good stories and aesthetic formula, like pastoral romanticism in the videos of Li Ziqi [10]. Such views tend to collect video as a vehicle of existing content or imposition of influence to things outside of the text and ignores the essence of the engagement: the natural architecture, embodiment, and multi-sensory immediacy of that video experience itself [4]. What does the particular association of light, shadow, sound, rhythm, texture prompt in physiological and emotional responses directly to overcome cognitive unfamiliarity? What is the effect of sensory choice differentiation of food video on the experiences of the audience, which creates a distinct bargaining model of cultural discount?

In this respect, these dynamics are examined in this study via digital sensory ethnography. It considers video not as a carefully crafted sensory space but as something not restricted to semantic text, and considers user commentaries as documentation of body-in-motion perception [11]. The study compares three typical channels that offer the whole range of sensory approaches: Chef Wang (hardcore cooking performance), Pasta Grannies (warmer family tradition) and Emojoie (minimalist meditative aesthetics).

The paper proposes a generative mechanism of sensory compensation as a process of the digital cultural flows and explains how certain audiovisual design impacts predictable audience behaviour, such as technological learning, to the body regulation. It explores the active role of sensory design and embodiment of the audience in mediating the same. On a practical front, the research presents the framework of sensory experience to inform content creators in building the emotional resonance across cultures.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

The theory of cultural discount as presented by Hoskins and Mirus [6] in the domain of cultural studies and in reference to digital platforms throughout the globe is what provided the foundation of transnational communications study. Its logic undercarning assumes that due to cultural peculiarities, there is a loss of symbolic understanding and effectiveness of communication in the flows of globalisation. Cultural Discount and theory of Cultural Proximity [12] represent the differences between cultures as either a quantifiable loss in economic terms or a language obstacle with origins in cognitive reasoning. However the augmentation of platform governance forces us to review this mechanism of discount. The approach of Algorithmic Diffusion Landscapes introduced by Wang shows that cultural discounting does not presuppose a predetermined devaluation of values, but a redesigning of these working approaches with the help of technology and sensual media [13]. This paper reacts to this change by incorporating the concept of the Sensory Turn in media studies and asserting the view that cross-cultural interaction is more rapidly becoming embodied, involving pre-cognitive experience than enacting semantic translation [4].

Through the Sensory Turn, food videos with the postings of the social media users can be discussed as carefully constructed sensory spaces. This supraliminal arrangement of visual repetitions and soundscapes, known as Sensory Rhetoric, is directly determined to the physiologic processes of the audience, and thus the dissolution of dividing barriers put up by cultural identity takes place subconsciously. The given phenomenon can be supported by the so-called visual hunger [14]: the human biological instinct can be excited by high-intensity sensory activities, creating a certain hunger of digital nature, beyond the cultural domains. Despite the intrinsically multisensual characteristics of food [15,16], the related literature incorporates primarily the psychological examination of the types of relaxation states and emotional reactions caused by ASMR [17,18], ignoring the more profound meaning of the strategies of sensory interaction as mediating factors in the negotiation between cultures.

The major question of this paper is how these sensory strategies can be regarded as compensation measures of cross-cultural distance in global logics of algorithms. Sensory analysis is selected as the logical point of departure, focusing on the various sides as to whether or not discounting takes place, and how creators are effectively using Sensory Realism-Controllables [19], as to whether it is being controlled or not. Such an analytic strategy shows the logic of production of sensorial proximity: the food preparation operations are turned into aestheticised audio-visuality, when the audience is allowed to experience emotional resonance through the intuitive bodily engagements, even when absolutely uninformed about the linguistic systems or symbolic traditions on which the videos are built, in order to produce a sense of proximity which is mediated by the platform."

3. Methodology: a digital sensory ethnography

This paper uses the comparative digital sensory ethnography design to examine the impact of the unique sensory strategies regarding the use of YouTube food shorts on cross-cultural receivership. The research bases itself on three sensory archetype channels so as to have representativeness of the sample.

3.1. Research design and case selection

On the digital landscape of YouTube, 3 channels were picked as models of different sensory experiences. Chef Wang (CW) occupies the center of the typology of the professional spectacle, a

master of shifting the Chinese culinary skills into a high intensity audiovisual drama of the din of the high pressure stoves, professional kitchen space, and a lightning-pace feeling of editing. Conversely, Grandma Pasta (PG) is all about hearth in the family, in which the focus is on the visuals of touch and slow-motion shot actions such as dough-kneostic movements. This expression of the generation appeals more easily to the embodied memories of the home setting by viewers who are cosy and comfortable, as well. Lastly, Emojoie (E) acts as a meditative product, combining minimalistic design, visual organization and ASMR recording segments, creating a sense environment. It goes beyond baking lessons, and it provides viewers with a deep rejuvenating effect. This paper relies on triangulation in providing a powerful point of view as to how individual sensory experiences relative to the rejuvenation of vision, warm exchanges, and peaceful moments can help readjust mental orienting towards the issue of cultural closeness.

3.2. Data collection

To gain the relationship between the design of the text (creators intent) and reception (audience experience), two parallel lines of data collection were applied. The corpus that is collected includes twelve classic videos containing CW Channel's video on Kung Pao Chicken, PG Channel's video on Bari-style Orecchiette and E Channel's video on White Strawberry Tart. These are the basis to sensory rhetorical analysis. Also, the analysis deployed YouTube data instruments in order to assemble a sample of more than 2, 300 representative comments (around 1, 300 on the CW channel; 1, 150 on the PG channel; and the E channel used as a control sample), which fully records the deep engagement of AirDNA cross-cultural audiences on the platform. In order to maintain ethical considerations, user data has been anonymised.

3.3. Analytical procedure: two-stage iterative narrative

The critical dialogue between the sensory texts and the responses of the audience is an incremental process of analytical nature. The research embraces the methods of sensory rhetoric analysis of video texts at the preliminary stage of the study, where decoding is performed through sensory ethnography [4] and multimodal discourse analysis [20]. Coding design is informed by visual rhetoric, the dominance of soundscape, and temporal and bodily rhetoric analyses. This defined the unique sense-based affordances of every typology. Data on audience reception was the second phase of the research process when the data was analysed using iterative inductive-deductive coding techniques [21], immersive open analysis of viewer feedback was used to sense the entire ecology of commentary in the channel. The comments were subjected to line-by-line coding that produced descriptive names of the comment like a nostalgic memory or a technical praise. These early codes were then coded in 5-7 core themes per channel code tables. The quantification of frequency of reactions of the total data then mapped the audience responses of a given label in the sense of a particular label. This reached a culmination in interpretative triangulation: a dialogic synthesis of quantified thematic patterns of sensory rhetorical analysis. The overall analysis can be used to explain, in an empirical fashion, the operations of the so-called micro-mechanism of the compensation of sensory functions of spectacle or warmth.

3.4. Positionality and ethics

Since the researcher is a non-native viewer of two of three cultures being investigated, he or she was more sensitive to the way the negotiations focused on the senses. Based on this cultural background,

it is possible to reflect on the way of turning the strangeness into admiration or nostalgia. All data that has been captured is publicly accessible, and usernames are anonymised to prevent intrusion on the privacy of commentators, which is why the analysis is inclined towards the trends of mass discourse, but not the identity of the particular commentator.

4. Results and discussion: a typology of sensory compensation

Through our analysis we find that cultural discount is not what is predetermined in the short-video ecology but is an active process whose mediation is aided through its designed sensorial experiences. The three paradigmatic cases constitute the different avenues in which the sensory rhetoric is bound to provoke particular audience practices in controlling the distance between cultures.

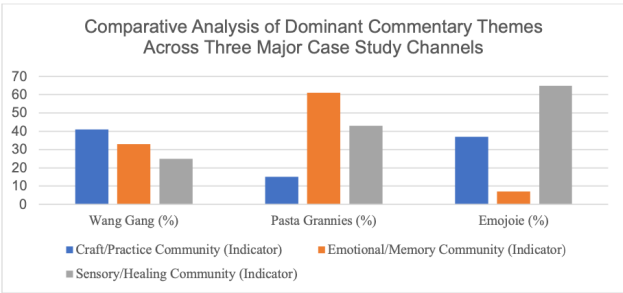


Figure 1. Proportion of the top three themes extracted from each channel's comment data

4.1. Chef Wang: the "professional spectacle" and the techno-humorous collective

The audiovisual architecture of chef Wang (CW) does not wipe out the uniqueness of culture but actually exaggerates the otherness to present a spectacle of cultural masterpiece and productive awe [22]. The audiovisual stimuli of the video, the roar of gas-burners, the clatter of utensils, and knife swings at lightning speed create a sensory interface in place of the distance of cultures and the cultural admiration set in the air with technical admiration. He re-packages the cultural strangeness of urban behaviors such as hot wok, cold oil, as performance with high skills. As was observed in the coding process, there was a dynamic tension between two elements: 41 percent of the comments focused on the technical apprenticeship (e.g., about the oil temperature or on the local ingredient substitutes), and the visual consumption was being turned into a cooking classroom, where cultural distance became the staged problem. In the meantime, 47% of the comments are focused on funny interactions in the community, making inside jokes and Memes. The cultural otherness that these videos cause is absorbed by an expansive community of believers, awe and charmingly playful.

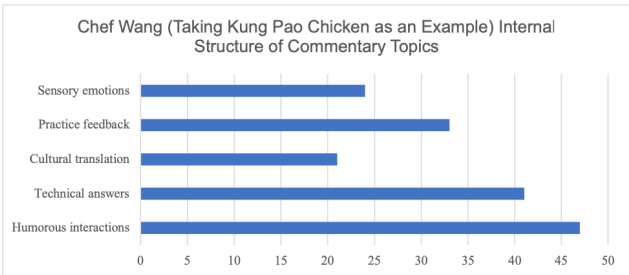


Figure 2. Wang Gang's dual-core community diagram

This shows that professional spectacle is working as productive amazement. The threatening orientalism created by such tricks as hot wok, cold oil is sold as the art of wizardry, making the audience feel perspective outsiders instead of part of an interactive online society. In this case, the notion of the socially binding stall-owner serves as a social glue in that the humorous storytelling serves to melt the fear created by the performance.

4.2. The "familial hearth" (Pasta Grannies): bridging proximity through affection

The Aesthetic of Familial Hearth typified by Pasta Grannies (PG) uses the concept of emotional realism to attract emotional distances [23]. All the comments made by the viewers in the comments section of the channel are more than 80 percent personal reminiscences and the importance of cultural heritage. The key of this sensual rhetoric consists in a pleasing tactile poetism: natural light and rhythmic sound of kneading dough appeal to the generalized archetype of the good grandmother. In this context, the differences in culture are broken down with the help of emotional appeal: sensual warmth leads the viewers to sympathetic relation and allows audiences to find a feeling of acquaintance with the cultural setting of the video despite the differences in their background [12].

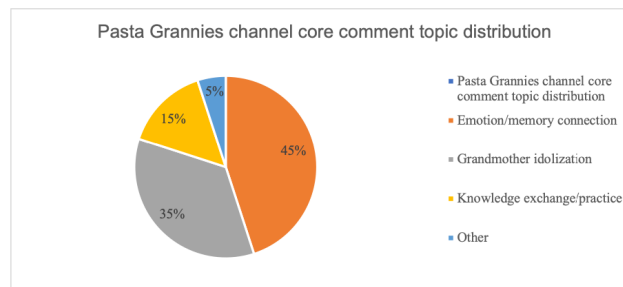


Figure 3. Pasta Grannies' emotional engagement pie chart

Most of the signals of the audience were filled with nostalgic feelings. The overall repetitive pattern of 1,150 comments was characterized as intergenerational memory activation and it is full of nostalgic stories that expressed the yearning. Some of the comments passed on by the viewers included the following, My Nonna was from Sicily or associated the footage with family parentage. The use of sensory cues were direct channels through which bodily memories could be aroused, where visual effects were prioritised on the basis of highlighting the tactile experience e.g. the feel of hand-kneaded dough. PG brought to high profile recipe sharing, a kind of live records of cultural passing on where the familiarity dominated the effects of cultural discounting. The audience did not perceive exotic methods, but the universal human feeling of love and care, which successfully removed a cultural divide with the assistance of emotional appeal.

4.3. Emojoie: non-characterised products as digital sedatives

Emojoie (E) symbolizes the complete change of culinary objects, their deprivation of the cultural bases by radical minimalism and ASMR methods, and conversion to non-figure headbanging drugs. E disconnects food and language and context, as well as building a sensual bubble that goes beyond particular culinary practices. This sensory experience fits into the "Attention Restoration Theory: [24] that provides a restorative oasis to the realities of the modern sensorimotor saturation. It also highlights an example of instrumental application of media in digital wellness and ASMR disciplines to cause neurological or psychological outcomes [18, 25].

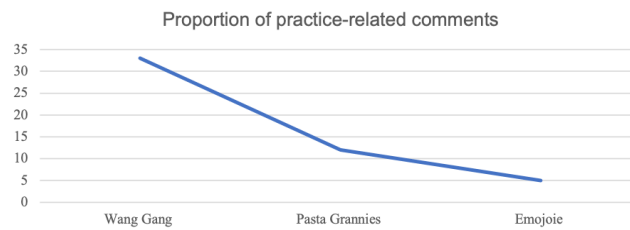


Figure 4. The practice-willingness descending curve

The whole process takes place without any speech through sterile and bright visual representation, carefully designed shots, and magnified and crystalline sound effects of ASMR (cutting, stirring). The culinary process is condensed into a purely abstract visual and acoustic performance creating a non-representational sensual item. A close examination of audience feedback shows that there is one particular trend it can be observed: audience engagement has been mainly focused on body and emotional control. The prevailing feedback is with regard to the therapeutic value of the videos. They are also described as anxiety-relieving, as well as a brain massage and necessary in order to fall asleep. The experience is being consumed as an instrument of online wellness.

Remarkably, the praise is focused on visual beauty, graceful gestures, and the sound quality mostly. There is a clear lack of inquiries on the actual cooking process as shows data. This implies that individuals value food as more of an aesthetical creation than a repeat recipe. In this paradigm of meditative product, the cultural differences are inactive via transcendent aestheticisation. Viewers do not watch Japanese food, but rather watch aesthetics universal relaxation and beauty that are balanced and tuned in aesthetics. Cultural particularism is apothethetised into an international common money of peace and loveliness.

4.4. Synthesis: a contingent model of sensory compensation

These forms make up a conditional model of perceived cultural distance and sensory compensation interaction (see Table 1).

This model turns the sensory turn of the empirical analysis of culture by presenting the fact that culture can be discounted (spectacle), can be avoided (hearth) or can be un-packaged (product). It puts an emphasis on the macroeconomic constraints changing to micro-based interactive negotiations, whereby the sensorial experience becomes the dominant factor in the fluidity of cultures.

These not only type up a contingency model of strategy of the interplay of perceived cultural distance and compensation of sensory perceptions (see Table 1). It has been shown that the cultural discounts can be abused (spectacle), avoided (homeland), or internationally neutralised (product). It brings the analytical focus out of macro-level economic barriers to micro-level interactive negotiations where the main driver to cultural fluidity is the experience of the senses.

Table 1. Contingent model matrix (high/low distance vs. extrinsic/intrinsic appeal)

Typology	Sensory Rhetoric	Dominant Audience Engagement	Core Compensation Logic
Professional Spectacle (Wang Gang)	Intensity, speed, auditory/visual shock	Technical problem-solving + Humorous community building	Reframing distance as a spectacle to be admired and a puzzle to be solved within a communal frame.

Table 1. (continued)

Familial Hearth (Pasta Grannies)	Warmth, slowness, tactile authenticity	Emotional memory activation + Heritage valorization	Overwhelming distance with universal affective and familial resonance.
Meditative Product (Emojie)	Minimalism, ASMR, visual purity	Somatic regulation + Aesthetic appreciation	Transcending distance by abstracting content into a non-cultural, sensory-therapeutic product.

5. Conclusion

The conventional cultural exchange systems are evolving. This paper examines the hypothesis of the cultural discounting in the current ecosystem based on platforms. The study has moved away on macro level economic impediments to micro level sensory experience bargaining. Thereupon, it is not the shared scarcity that makes the logic of global cultural circulation to stay as well, but a dynamic process guided by carefully orchestrated sensorial experiences of creators.

The results show that there are three different paths of sensory compensation. As an example, Chef Wang asks the audience to turn the alienation of Chinese cooking methods into a professional drama thus overcoming the cultural differences to gain technical recognition. On the contrary, Pasta Grannies fills this gap by engaging the universal archetype of home comfort. Lastly, Emojie will turn food into an abstract, enchanting commodity; serves as a sacrament of the senses and passes the boundaries of cultures.

Sensory rhetoric is a pre-cognitive interface. It negates the use of symbols and develops cross-cultural interaction even in the absence of a common culinary background. Nonetheless, there still remains an essential contradiction: as these sensory tactics create intimacy of the senses, they also draw our attention to a change of direction where now food is experienced instead of being cognized. Concisely, this paper proposes a sensory turn towards international communication research. Determining the way a well-arranged environment prompts such practices as body control that are foreseeable, the analysis presents an important perspective through which the global digital culture can be understood. The viewpoint is crucial towards meeting sensory proximity [4] in more and more discontinuous algorithmic milieu.

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