

Culinary Lifestyle and Consumer Culture in Consuming Gacoan Noodles in Yogyakarta Students through the Perspective of Jean Baudrillard's Consumerism Theory

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the culinary lifestyle and consumer culture of Yogyakarta students in consuming Mie Gacoan through the perspective of Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism. The study aims to analyze how the culinary lifestyle and consumer culture of students are formed in the context of Mie Gacoan consumption. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a postmodern paradigm, data were collected through interviews, non-participatory observations, and documentation of Yogyakarta students who regularly consume Mie Gacoan. Data analysis employs Baudrillard's theory of consumerism, which views consumption as a process of identity and social status formation. The research findings indicate that the consumption of Mie Gacoan among Yogyakarta students is not solely based on physiological needs but is also influenced by lifestyle, consumer culture, social media, and the desire to build certain identities and social statuses. The study concludes that food consumption is a complex social phenomenon where food choices become symbols of status, identity, and social capital.

INTRODUCTION

Food is an inseparable staple of human life. Apart from being a source of energy, food has also evolved to become an integral part of culture and social identity. One of the food products that has become an important part of culinary culture in Indonesia is noodles. Mie, which was originally introduced by Chinese traders in the 17th century, has come a long way in Indonesia's culinary history.

Noodles began to enter Indonesia through the influence of Chinese culture in the 17th century. In Chinese, noodles are known as "mian". Chinese traders introduced this food, which was then adapted into various variants that were preferred by the Indonesian people. Initially, noodles were an exclusive food that could only be found in areas with large Chinese populations, such as Jakarta, Medan, and Surabaya. Noodles were initially sold in small stalls and street vendors.

Entering the 20th century, noodles began to be widely accepted by the Indonesian people and became one of the popular foods throughout the country. The noodles then underwent various adaptations and modifications to suit the tastes and habits of the Indonesian people. These modifications have resulted in various variants of noodles that we know to this day, such as fried noodles, noodles, letheke noodles, chicken noodles, and Aceh noodles. Each variant has a distinctive taste that reflects the uniqueness of its region of origin.

In the modern era, along with the development of the culinary industry and food business, noodles undergo further transformation. One of the significant developments is the emergence of instant noodles, which are a favorite of the public because of their ease of serving and affordable prices. In addition, noodles are also the main menu in various restaurants, food stalls, and culinary franchises in Indonesia. Noodles are no longer only seen as a side dish or rice substitute when feeling bored. Along with the entry of foreign cultural influences and the development of the times, noodles have become a staple food for some people. Noodle consumption is no longer seen as just a fulfillment of basic needs, but also as part of lifestyle and social identity.

In this context, an interesting phenomenon emerged with the presence of Mie Gacoan, a trademark of a chain of spicy noodle restaurants that is a favorite in Indonesia. Mie Gacoan, which is a subsidiary of PT Pesta Pora Abadi, began operations in early 2016. The name "Mie Gacoan" is taken from the word "Gaco" in Javanese, which means hero or mainstay. Mie Gacoan has opened many branches in various major cities in Indonesia, including Malang, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Solo, Bandung, Cirebon, and Bali. In Yogyakarta itself, there are 8 branches of Mie Gacoan outlets spread across various regions, such as Colombo, Kota Baru, Godean, Taman Siswa, Babarsari, Magelang, Gejayan, and Wirobrajan.

The unique concept offered by Mie Gacoan can be seen from the atmosphere of the restaurant which is attractive, cool, and spacious. Each restaurant has a large design, gives the impression of spaciousness and is able to accommodate many visitors. This is a special attraction, especially for young people and students. The popularity of Mie Gacoan, especially among students, is interesting to study from the perspective of consumerism and consumer

culture. The consumption of Mie Gacoan is no longer just about fulfilling basic needs, but is also related to identity, social status, and lifestyle.

Jean Baudrillard, in his theory of consumer society, explains that consumption has shifted from simply meeting needs to consuming signs. When a person consumes an object, they are actually consuming a sign, and through the process of that consumption, they define themselves. In the context of Mie Gacoan, consumption is not only about taste or price, but also about the experience, status, and identity formed through that consumption.

Social media and technology play an important role in shaping the consumer culture around Mie Gacoan. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are a means to share dining experiences, create trends, and build perceptions about products. For example, on TikTok, content with the hashtag #miegacoan has reached 65.5 thousand discussions, showing the high interest and user interaction related to this product. This phenomenon creates what Baudrillard calls simulations, in which social reality is shaped by signs and symbols disseminated through the media. This can cause the FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) phenomenon, where consumers feel the need to try and consume Mie Gacoan so as not to miss the trend.

For students, consuming Mie Gacoan is not only about meeting their dietary needs, but also about being part of the community and expressing their identity. The choice to eat at Mie Gacoan can be seen as a way for students to construct and communicate themselves in society. Yasraf Amir Piliang, in his study of consumer culture, emphasized that lifestyle not only reflects individual identity, but is also a way for individuals to construct themselves in society through their consumption choices and activities. In this context, the selection of Mie Gacoan as a favorite place to eat can be seen as part of the process of forming student identities and lifestyles.

This study aims to analyze the culinary lifestyle and consumer culture among Yogyakarta students in consuming Mie Gacoan, using the perspective of Jean Baudrillard's consumerism theory. The focus of the research is on how the consumption of Mie Gacoan is part of the formation of students' identities and lifestyles, as well as the role of the media in influencing their consumption behavior. The significance of this research lies in efforts to understand the dynamics of food consumption among students not only from an economic or nutritional perspective, but also from a cultural and sociological perspective. This understanding is important to dig deeper into how food products like Mie Gacoan can become a broader social phenomenon, influence lifestyles, and shape the identities of young consumers.

In addition, this research can also provide valuable insights for culinary industry players on how food products can be positioned not only as a fulfillment of physical needs, but also as part of the lifestyle and identity of consumers. For academics, this research can contribute to the development of consumer culture studies and food sociology in Indonesia. By using a qualitative approach and the perspective of Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism, this research is expected to reveal the layers of meaning behind the phenomenon of Mie Gacoan consumption among Yogyakarta students. The results of this research can later

be the basis for understanding more about the consumption behavior of Indonesia's young generation, especially in the context of food and lifestyle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research is an important effort to find comparisons and inspiration for future research. Some of the relevant research that has been conducted covers various aspects of consumerism and lifestyle. One of them is research on the phenomenon of consumption behavior in the era of capitalism, which uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. This research correlates Islamic teachings with the topic of a strong consumption culture in the midst of a capitalist society. The findings of his research show that there is an incentive for individuals to identify themselves with the items they own, as well as the influence of the advertising industry in encouraging consumptive behavior.

The Agenda Setting Theory introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw provides an important perspective in understanding the role of the media in shaping public opinion. This theory explains how the media has the ability to influence what society considers important. In the context of consumerism and culinary lifestyles, Agenda Setting can be applied to understand how media shapes certain food trends and preferences. For example, the media can influence the popularity of certain types of food, restaurants, or eating styles through intense and repetitive coverage. The relationship between Agenda Setting Theory and Jean Baudrillard's concept of consumerism offers interesting insights. Baudrillard argues that the media plays a key role in shaping public perceptions of needs and desires through the constant representation of certain products and lifestyles. This results in the creation of intangible needs but is felt to be very important by consumers. In a culinary context, the media can create hyperreality, where food looks more seductive in media representations compared to the original product, creating unrealistic expectations of the culinary experience.

Lifestyle includes the patterns of behavior, habits, and preferences of individuals or groups in daily life that reflect social values, norms, and identities. According to Setomo and Soemarwoto, lifestyle includes various aspects of life such as diet, physical activity, consumption of goods and services, hobbies, and social activities. Lifestyle not only reflects individual preferences, but is also influenced by external factors such as the environment, economic conditions, and culture.

Culinary lifestyle is an important aspect of lifestyle in general. It includes the behavior patterns, habits, and preferences of an individual or group in choosing, buying, and consuming daily food. According to Santoso, the culinary lifestyle includes preferences for the type of food, cooking methods, frequency of meals, places to eat, and consumption patterns of additional foods. In a postmodern perspective, the culinary lifestyle is closely related to the concept of a consumer society put forward by Bauman, where society has shifted from a production society to a consumption society.

Consumer culture in the culinary context discusses values, patterns, and practices related to food consumption. Yasraf Amir Piliang explained that consumer culture is the result of the dynamics between individuals, media, technology, and economic institutions that shape consumption behavior in society. In cultural studies, food consumption is not only seen as the fulfillment of physical needs, but also as a way to reconstruct culture and express identity.

Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon of consumption in modern society. Baudrillard argues that consumption has become a way of life in which consumer goods have a sign value that is more important than their use value. In the culinary context, this can be seen from how food is no longer just to satisfy hunger, but also a symbol of status, lifestyle, and identity. Baudrillard also introduced the concept of simulation and simulacra, in which reality has been replaced by representation and imagery, which is very relevant in understanding the phenomenon of "Instagram-able food" and culinary trends driven by social media.

Cultural Studies is an approach that understands how culture is formed from people's behavior. Raymond Williams states that culture includes the creation of an organization, the structure of the family, the institutions that govern social relationships, and the way in which members of society communicate. In the culinary context, Cultural Studies can help understand how food becomes part of cultural identity and how food consumption practices reflect social structures and power relations in society.

METHODOLOGY

Another significant research is the study of consumerism in the perspective of Jean Baudrillard. Using qualitative methods with literature studies, this study reveals changes in consumption culture patterns that are influenced by socio-economic changes and globalization. The important findings are the change in the meaning of the object of consumption to the "sign" of identity and social status, as well as the shift in the orientation of consumption from the fulfillment of biological needs to the means of fulfilling sociological needs.

The consumption style and behavior of Generation Z consumers in coffee shops is also an interesting research focus. Using qualitative methods with in-depth interviews and AIO (Activity, Interest, Opinion) lifestyle dimension theory, this study found that the behavior of gen Z coffee shop consumers tends to lead to aspirational luxury or emotional satisfaction, rather than just the fulfillment of basic needs.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To explain the results of the research, it is necessary to know an overview of the sources of informants involved in the research. Therefore, it is necessary to explain how the informants involved in the research are. The informant who was selected based on the criteria as a consumer of Mie Gacoan, in one month at least consumed Mie Gacoan more than twice, and had tried more than one menu of Mie Gacoan. The criteria for informants are people who have the status of

students in Yogyakarta City who consume Mie Gacoan at least twice a month, and have tried more than one menu of gacoan noodles. The process of the researcher determining the informant by randomly determining and conducting a direct interview at one of the gacoan noodle outlets.

Informant Profile 1

The first informant, whose full name is Ismi Farihatun Zein, is usually called Ismi, currently Ismi is studying at Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta and is in Semester 8. As a student in the last semester, Ismi's daily busyness is to complete her thesis responsibilities and to relieve stress, she usually goes to play with some of her friends. Ismi has a favorite food, namely seblak, the type of seblak she likes is seblak that is not spicy, this is because Ismi has stomach acid pain so she can't eat spicy food because it can have a bad impact on her health.

Ismi often gets information about food content, and snacks through the Tiktok application on her smartphone. Not all the food content that she finds she tries usually she sorts out in advance which content she finds interesting. Ismi is a person who often buys snacks, but this depends on if someone invites Ismi to snack, if no one invites her, then Ismi does not go to snacks.

Ismi first consumed gacoan noodles when she was in the city of Bekasi when she visited her brother. Ismi is a person who rarely consumes a large amount of gacoan noodles because she calculates how many noodles she has consumed in a month. According to Ismi, there is no specific time when she comes to Mie Gacoan, this depends on whether she wants to eat or not.

Informant Profile 2

The second informant has the full name Niken Pratiwi and is familiarly called by his friends by the name Niken. Niken is also a student who studies education at Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta with a major in Communication and Multimedia Sciences, currently Niken is in semester 8. In the midst of his busy work on his thesis, Niken also has a hobby of listening to music. Niken has many favorite foods, one of his favorite foods is noodles such as chicken noodles and gacoan noodles. Niken prefers products from Mie Gacoan with a sweet taste, namely Mie Gacoan.

Niken often finds information about food through the Tiktok application, he often finds a variety of snack reviews content carried out by foodvloggers. For Niken, he rarely tries directly the snacks he finds from social media. Niken's habit when he wants to snack is usually that he is quizzed directly with his friends and this depends on the situation where Niken is, if he is at home then he will invite friends near home, if he is close to campus then he will invite his college friends.

Niken first consumed gacoan noodles in 2020 when he was first invited to try at the Mie Gacoan branch located in the Babarsari area, Sleman, Yogyakarta. He said that he first tried gacoan noodles because he saw a long and crowded queue and became marketing and interested. For Niken, there is no specific time when he will consume gacoan noodles, if he feels like buying then he will buy it.

Informant Profile 3

The third informant is a woman who studies at Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta, she is usually familiarly called by the name Sumiati. Sumiati is an 8th semester student. Sumiati's daily activity as a student in the last semester is to complete a thesis. To entertain herself so that she does not get bored, she has a hobby of lying down and relaxing while reading a book. Sumiati has a favorite food, namely Mie Gacoon level 1, for Sumiati she does not like spicy food, therefore she often buys gacoon with level 1. Sumiati has a snack instinct that can be said to be often invited or invited by her boarding house friends to look for snacks. In a week, Sumiati usually calculates expenses for snacks, usually she can spend a hundred thousand rupiah in a week. At least in a week, Sumiati spends fifty thousand rupiah on snacks.

Sumiati often gets information about snacks and food through the TikTok application, besides that Sumiati also actively uses applications such as shopeefood to buy food online. If you get a discount promo voucher from the shopeefood application, Sumiati will take advantage of the voucher. Sumiati's first experience of consuming Mie Gacoon began when she moved for the first time to the city of Yogyakarta, she saw her boarding house neighbors buying Mie Gacoon from there she saw and was interested in trying and until now she likes to eat gacoon noodles. At least in a month, Sumiati buys gacoon noodles three times. According to Sumiati's statement, she has never tried the three gacoon noodle menus, she has only tried Mie Gacoon with a characteristic sweet taste and Mie Hompimpa with a characteristic salty taste.

Informant Profile 4

The fourth informant is a student who is studying at the Islamic University of Indonesia who is familiarly called Shifa, at the time of the interview Shifa was a 2nd semester student majoring in Law. In addition to doing her college assignments, Shifa in her free time usually goes for a walk with her friends and looks for culinary snacks in the city of Yogyakarta. For Shifa, he doesn't have a specific favorite food, for him, if there is good food, it means that he likes it. Shifa often gets information about food places from the Tiktok application, especially for him, young people who move to Yogyakarta seeing food reviews make him curious.

According to a statement from Shifa, he often buys snacks, especially snacks located in the area around the campus. Shifa usually snacks after carrying out science class activities, before he snacks, he usually discusses first with his friends to determine what food they will buy. Usually Shifa and his friends choose a place that provides a variety of menu options because the tastes that he and his friends have are different.

Shifa's first experience of consuming Gacoon was when he came to Yogyakarta, previously he already knew about Mie Gacoon, but because Mie Gacoon has not been sold in the city where he lives, this causes him not to have the opportunity to try. When he first arrived in Yogyakarta, he finally had the opportunity to try Gacoon Noodle products. Based on Shifa's statement while in Yogyakarta, he often consumes Mie Gacoon four to five times a month. Because the distance between the campus and the Gacoon Noodle Outlet is quite far,

when he came to the city area, he took the time at least to stop by to buy Gacoan Noodles.

Informant Profile 5

The fifth informant is a student studying at Gajah Mada University majoring in Geodesy Engineering. The fifth informant has the full name Niken Cahya Mulayani and is commonly called Nia. When the interview was carried out, Nia was an 8th semester student who was doing her thesis. In addition to working on a thesis in her free time, Nia usually fills it by watching movies. According to Nia, she has a favorite food with a sweet taste, for her if there is a new sweet food in Yogyakarta City, she will try it. He also stated that he often gets information about food and snacks from the Tiktok application. Nia also stated that in a week she rarely snacks because she is exploring a diet, in a week she usually snacks approximately two to three times. Each Nia snack also limits her spending to a maximum of forty thousand rupiah, forty thousand rupiah is calculated from the meal money plus the pocket money. He always makes sure that at least in a day he should not spend forty thousand rupiah.

Nia said that she often gets promos from Tiktok and Instagram applications, every time she gets a promo, she always takes advantage of the promo. Nia also often gets along with her friends when they want to snack or eat. Usually they are distracted by places to eat that they have never tried.

Nia's first experience eating Mie Gacaon was when she was invited by her brother to come to the city of Yogyakarta, In addition, when Mie Gacoan opened a branch in the city of Semarang, Nia took the time to try to eat in the city. Nia stated that she had tried all types of dumpling menus in Mie Gacoan, she stated that she preferred Mie Gacoan with a characteristic sweet taste. Nia often buys gacoan noodles in the afternoon to night.

The Relationship between Culinary Lifestyle and Consumer Culture

Through Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Consumerism with the Results of Interviews with Resource Persons.

The Culinary Lifestyle of Each Resource Person

The culinary lifestyle of each resource person displayed variations that reflected the complexity of consumption in the context of consumerism theory. Ismi Farifatun Zein shows her exploratory lifestyle by trying a variety of new foods, which are often influenced by exposure through social media. This phenomenon is in accordance with Baudrillard's theory of consumption as an active process in creating identity through the symbolic play of consumed goods. Social media serves as a medium that not only provides information about food, but also constructs an ideal representation of the desired culinary experience, creating an appetizing simulation and consumer identity.

Niken Pratiwi, with a preference for snacks such as noodles and dimsum, shows how food consumption also involves aspects of values in consumerism theory. Gacoan noodles, for example, are not only a food product, but also a symbol of social status and affiliation with a certain group. Baudrillard emphasized that the values of consumer goods help individuals form their

collective and individual identities. In this context, Niken uses food consumption as a way to maintain and express his identity in his social environment.

On the other hand, Sumiati shows a more structured consumption pattern, which reflects the element of social capital in the theory of consumerism according to Bourdieu. Bourdieu emphasized that consumption is not only about personal preference, but also about how individuals use consumption as capital to indicate their status and social class. Sumiati's habit of buying foods that are familiar and convenient for her shows how she uses her accumulated knowledge and experience to make more informed consumption decisions.

Shifa, with his flexibility to different types of food influenced by the campus environment and his friends, reflects the influence of consumer culture in Baudrillard's theory. Baudrillard describes consumption as an active process in building collective and individual identities through participation in an ever-changing culture of consumption. Shifa uses food consumption as a way to socially interact and express herself in a dynamic and diverse social context in the campus environment.

Nia, despite being on a diet, still shows her interest in sweet foods influenced by family experiences. This illustrates how food consumption can also be a way to maintain and reproduce an accepted family or cultural identity. In Baudrillard's theory, consumption is not only about the physical aspect or need for food, but also about how individuals use consumption as a means to reinforce and communicate their personal and collective identities in a broader social context.

The Existence of Aspects of Values and Signs for Each Resource Person

According to Baudrillard, the concept of values in consumerism states that items not only serve as practical tools to meet physical needs, but also carry a deep symbolic meaning. Mie Gacoan, for example, showed strong values among the interviewees. For Ismi and Nia, Mie Gacoan is not just a food, but also a symbol of social status and the trends they follow with their friends. In Baudrillard's theory, this reflects consumption as a symbolic activity that helps individuals build and maintain their identities through participation in an ever-changing culture of consumption.

Niken and Shifa, who consider Mie Gacoan as part of their social routine, show how these food values integrate them into the wider culinary community. Gacoan noodles became more than just food; It becomes a social medium that facilitates social interaction and exchange between them. In this context, Baudrillard will highlight that food consumption is not only about meeting physical needs, but also about how it serves as a symbolic language that helps build social networks and strengthen collective identity.

Sumiati, with a consumption pattern that is more focused on specific comforts and memories, suggests that values in consumerism can also be found in personal and emotional experiences. Even though she is more selective in choosing the food she consumes, Sumiati still sees symbolic value in food that brings her to a pleasant or satisfying experience. In Baudrillard's perspective, it underscores that food consumption refers not only to economic value or

practicality, but also to how food builds and strengthens an individual's emotional and social bonds with their environment.

The Existence of Simulation and Simulacra Aspects in Consumerism

The experience of Niken Pratiwi, Sumiati, Shifa, Nia, and Ismi in consuming Mie Gacoan can be analyzed through the lens of simulation theory and simulacra by Jean Baudrillard. Niken Pratiwi got to know Mie Gacoan through a crowded queue and reviews on TikTok, showing how the representations and expectations created by social media affect the reality and meaning she experienced. Sumiati was also captivated by the simulations created by the boarding house neighbors and often consumed Mie Gacoan because she was attracted by the appearance and food discount promos on the ShopeeFood online application.

Shifa, who first tried Mie Gacoan in Yogyakarta, often consumes it because he is trapped in a food simulation that is viral and popular among his friends. Nia, who originally knew Mie Gacoan from her brother, is now more influenced by social media and promos, showing how consumption becomes a simulacra that is detached from the original need to eat. For Ismi, at the peak of Mie Gacoan's popularity in 2020, she felt the need to follow the viral trend, even though her personal preference preferred sweet food to spicy. Ismi is trapped in a simulation, where the perception of the nagian taste of Mie Gacoan seasoning is the result of media representations that shape expectations and reality. This whole experience reflects how the meaning and reality of Mie Gacoan for them has gone through a complex simulation process, where the representations and expectations created by the media and consumer culture have become more dominant than the objective reality.

The Existence of Identity Aspects in Consumerism

The consumer identities discussed by Baudrillard are very relevant to the experiences of the interviewees. Food consumption is a way for them to express themselves and build a social identity. Ismi, who enjoys exploring new foods, shows her identity as a culinary adventurer. Niken and Shifa consolidate their identities as part of the campus's vibrant social community through their food choices. Sumiati shows her identity as a careful and planned consumer. Nia, even though she is on a diet, still maintains her identity as a sweet food lover and uses food consumption to maintain social relationships with her friends and family.

Interview Findings

Interviews with interviewees showed that the consumption of foods such as Mie Gacoan is not only about taste or physical need, but also about social meaning and identity. The interviewees indicated that their food choices were influenced by trends, friend recommendations, and media representations. Food consumption became their way of participating in social culture, building relationships, and expressing their identity. This experience shows that food consumption is a complex and multi-dimensional process involving various social and cultural factors.

Other Theories of Consumerism

This study illustrates that food consumption is a rich and complex social phenomenon, which not only includes aspects such as lifestyle, values, simulations, and identity, but also serves as a window for marking the social status and cultural capital of individuals. Theories such as those put forward by Pierre Bourdieu, especially the concepts of "habitus" and "social capital", provide an in-depth view of how individuals use food consumption as a tool to express and maintain their position in the social hierarchy.

In this context, the food preferences shown by Ismi and Nia, which are influenced by the social and family environment, are an example of how food consumption functions as a marker of social status. Their choices not only reflect personal preferences, but also illustrate how they internalize and reproduce the cultural values of their environment. For example, Ismi's preference for trying a wide variety of new foods, as well as Niken's knowledge of snacks such as noodles and dimsum, show how food consumption is also a reflection of the social capital they have – that is, knowledge and access to information and social resources.

Additionally, through social and culinary interactions, individuals like Sumiati and Shifa express not only their personal preferences for food, but also how they build and maintain their social networks. Their snacking activities with friends, the dining options they visit, as well as the way they rate and recommend food, are all part of a larger social construct of identity and status in society. Overall, the study highlights that food consumption is not only about physical needs or personal choices, but also about how food serves as a social medium that facilitates interaction, builds relationships, and expresses an individual's social and cultural values. Theories such as those proposed by Bourdieu and Baudrillard provide a robust framework for understanding the complexity and significance of food consumption in a broader social and cultural context.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that food consumption is not just a functional activity to meet nutritional needs, but also a complex social phenomenon. The interviewees in this study showed variations in their culinary lifestyles, which were influenced by factors such as social environment, family experiences, and interactions with friends. Their culinary lifestyle reflects how food consumption is not only an individual action, but also a way to build social identity and show status in society.

The theory of consumerism, as proposed by Jean Baudrillard and Pierre Bourdieu, provides an in-depth view of how food is used as a symbol of status, identity, and social capital. Baudrillard's concept of sign value explains that food, such as Mie Gacoan in this case, is not only seen as an ordinary consumable ingredient, but also carries a complex symbolic meaning for the individual. This can be seen from how the interviewees used their food choices to express personal preferences, follow trends, and build or maintain social connections.

Meanwhile, Bourdieu's theory of "habitus" and "social capital" highlights that food consumption is influenced not only by personal taste, but also by the social and cultural background of the individual. Food preferences that are

learned and internalized from the social environment as well as knowledge about a particular food signify the existence of social capital that can influence how a person chooses and values food.

Thus, this study shows that food consumption is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather integrated in a broader social context. Snack activities, meal choices, and discussions about food with friends not only meet physical needs, but also play an important role in the formation of individual and group identities. Through this research, we can better understand how food consumption not only affects a person's way of life, but also how each person has a unique meaning of the social dynamic process that takes place while consuming Gacaon noodles.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Building upon this study, future research can explore the intersection of digital culture and culinary consumption, examining how social media platforms shape and amplify food trends, influence consumer preferences, and facilitate identity expression through virtual food-sharing practices. Investigating the role of influencers and user-generated content in establishing the social value of specific foods, such as Mie Gacoan, could offer insights into how digital spaces redefine traditional concepts of social capital and symbolic consumption. Additionally, comparative studies across different socio-economic and cultural groups can provide a nuanced understanding of how digitalization, globalization, and local cultural contexts converge to shape culinary lifestyles. By integrating digital ethnography with traditional sociological frameworks, researchers can capture the evolving dynamics of food as a symbol of identity, status, and community in an increasingly digitalized society.

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