FEEDING SENSUALITY THROUGH FOOD:
MALE AUDIENCE RESPONSES IN SURABAYA TOWARD VINDY LEE’S
CULINARY SEGMENT IN ANTV’S “JAKARTA BELUM TIDUR”

Dhita Fadhillah

ABSTRACT

This study examines the responses from male audiences in Surabaya toward Vindy Lee’s sensuality and sexuality as a host in culinary segment in “Jakarta Belum Tidur” (JBT) ANTV. This program was chosen because it brings new concept of culinary program by showing the sensuality and erotic image of its host. The responses from male audiences are gathered through in-depth interview. Audiences are asked their responses on the sexuality and sensuality of Vindy Lee, the use of sensuality in culinary program, and their reaction while watching the program. After gathering the responses, the concept of male gaze by Laura Mulvey is then applied to examine them. The result shows that Vindy Lee becomes the object of male audience desire and the signifier of castration threat. The writer found that most audiences experienced pleasure in looking at Vindy Lee as the sexy object but their pleasure does not reach the level of narcissistic due to Vindy Lee’s unnatural and over-made sensuality.

Keywords: JBT’s Culinary Segment, Male gaze, Sensuality, Sexuality, Vindy Lee.

1. Introduction

Daily, we are invited to enjoy various kinds of entertainment program such as infotainment, music, film, comedy, talk show, culinary show and many more. Those programs nowadays often present the sensuality and erotic image of women. This is reflected by news articles in official website of Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah (Posted in October 11th 2012), Komnas Perempuan Indonesia (Posted in April 21st 2013), online newspaper Beritasatu.com (Posted in November 15th 2012) and Ipotnews.com (Posted in November 19th 2012) claiming that the degree of symbolic violence and exploitation cases against women is increasing from year to year and mass media becomes one of its causes.

Recently, the exploitation of woman in the media does not only appear in adult entertainment program such as “Sexophone” (TRANS TV) and “Mata Lelaki” (Trans 7) aimed to give sex education for its viewers but also in sport program “Soccer Fever” (Trans TV) and “Jakarta Belum Tidur” culinary segment (ANTV) which are, from the title, far from the image of sexist and erotic. “Soccer Fever” gives different look to the male viewers by employing women as hosts, precisely sexy women. This program does not only give information about sport but also display sensuality of women to attract the viewers. Not less interesting, “Jakarta Belum Tidur” culinary segment also offers sexy female chef as a host. Although this program is entitled culinary program, it provides less information about culinary itself.

Therefore, the writer took Jakarta Belum Tidur (JBT) culinary segment as the object of analysis. JBT is a night entertainment program broadcasted every Monday at 11 pm. This program was aired 7 months on ANTV from April until November 2012 (28 episodes). This program has two segments and each has 15 minute duration. However the writer focuses only on the second segment hosted by Vindy Lee. It is because the second segment offers new format of culinary program in television.

Vindy Lee (30) was born on 23 November 1983 in Jakarta. She is a chef, model, dancer and author of ‘Sexy Food’ cookbook. She is the chef of Dapur Cantik in cooking segment of Trans 7. Lee has also been a regular guest chef of “811 Show” and “Dahsyat” (RCTI), and hosted ‘Taste of Indonesia’ segment in "Indonesia Now" of Metro TV and culinary travel segment in Jakarta Belum Tidur ANTV. As a model, she has been featured in several international male magazines including FHM and Maxim.

In every episodes of JBT’s culinary travel segment, Vindy Lee brings the audiences to visit restaurant and bar, walk around, taste the food and beverage and give slight comment on the meals. Sometimes she helped the official chef in that restaurant to make foods. It seems similar to common culinary travel program like Wisata Kuliner or Benu Buloe. However, from writer observation there are five distinctive characteristics on JBT’s Culinary Travel segment from others. Those differences are show times, audiences, sensual image, camera focus, and setting.
Culinary program is usually broadcasted not later than evening. However, JBT offers culinary adventure in the midnight. It can be assumed that the audiences are adult instead of all ages. This segment concerns with sensual and erotic image of its host, Vindy Lee. She performs with mini and strict dress, glamour make up, and flirtatious gesture. It is also supported by camera focus which frequently shoots on her lips, mouth, eyes, hip, even cleavage rather than food presentation itself by using medium, close up and extreme close up. It means that JBT seems to invite audience to explore the sexuality of Vindy Lee. JBT’s culinary travel segment also prefers high-class restaurants and bar more than family restaurant or café as the setting.

Morley (75) argued that television program is not an ‘innocent text’; no program only provides ‘entertainment’ rather than ideology or message about society. This is also what can be seen from JBT’s culinary travel segment which shifts culinary program into a midnight entertainment program. Such program gives opportunity for adult (Man) to explore the sensuality of woman chefs simultaneously. It also offers something new in entertainment program because it targets male audience for culinary generally becomes woman interest (Nathanson, 318, Lawson, 79 and During, 287).

Here, Vindy Lee is positioned to be looked at ness or an object of male spectator through camera and mise-en-scène that establishes sensual and sexual atmosphere and produces schopophilia even narcissistic among male spectator (Mulvey, 16). To examine sensuality in this text, Male gaze theory or cine psychoanalysis discussed by Laura Mulvey in her essay book “Visual and Other Pleasure” (1989) is applied. Laura Mulvey argued that the existence of the male gaze or phallocentrism manifestations in cinema emerges by terms of patriarchy and castration anxiety (Mulvey, 21). Woman is seen as powerless because she is lack of a penis and figure of castration. Men on the contrary become a figure of power and meaning maker while women are posed as passive and bearer of meaning. The writer categorized the response into two of Mulvey’s argument about the function of women image in media (1) as Object of Male Desire (2) as Signifier of Castration Threat (Mulvey cited in Storey, 105)

2. Methodology

The writer applied qualitative research method, particularly qualitative audience research. In this case, the writer used qualitative study to describe the reception or responses from male audiences in Surabaya toward the sexuality of Vindy Lee in Jakarta Belum Tidur culinary travel segment.

The study was conducted by using in-depth interview. The writer chose in-depth interview to collect the data. In-depth interview will give varied and deep understanding about the topic than focus group discussion (FGD) which concerns with debate and subject position. Besides, there is less time for people to speak in focus group discussion. On the contrary, in-depth interview offers deep and detailed investigation (Pickering, 75). Moreover, interview deals with participant’s experiences and point of view about some phenomena, in this case is their experiences on looking at female sensuality (Turner, 754-755).

This research used snowball sampling to find respondents. The criteria of participants are; heterosexual man, adult 19-30 years old (Erikson cited in boeree, 6), domiciled in Surabaya and at least have watched JBT culinary segment before. Primary data was obtained from in-depth interview result (transcript) based on participants opinion and video recording of Jakarta Belum Tidur episode “Sexy Shisa” downloaded from Youtube in 30 November 2012. This episode was used because it has higher rating and like rather than other episodes. Secondary sources are from library research in form of printed books, e-books, online journals, articles and magazine from internet. The research started from 25 February- 25 june 2013.

In doing the interview, the writer did small talk to respondents to establish proximity. It was done to make them feel secured and can give complete and relevant information. The participants were also told that they would remain anonymous. Before doing the interview, the writer activated the background knowledge of the participants in relation to celebrity chef, sexuality, adult entertainment and culinary program based on their perception and experience.

Then, the writer gave brief explanation about the program and asked them to pay attention to the visual symbol in that program. In the next step, the writer started to play the video of Jakarta Belum Tidur culinary segment. After that, the writer interviewed the participants. It was expected that the participants
could use or refer to their past experiences and knowledge about the concept of sensuality and culinary program while watching JBT culinary program. The questions for interview were formatted into open-ended question according to research statement and male gaze theory.

The writer conducted the following steps to do the analysis. Firstly, the interview was transcribed. The transcripts become the primary data to analyse. Then, in order to simplify the data, the writer classified and broke down the transcript based on the Male gaze concept about 1) Woman as Object of Male Desire 2) Woman as the Signifier of Castration Threat. After that, the writer interpreted the meaning and found the result. Before making final conclusion, the writer made triangulation or rechecked the data and other sources to make it accurate. In the end of this process, the writer made a conclusion.

3. Discussion

3.1 Woman as Object of Male Desire

According to Laura Mulvey, cinema offers possible pleasure, for instance, scophophilia and Narcissistic aspect. Schopophilia is pleasure of watching and it becomes source of pleasure (Mulvey, 16). This concept, schopophilia, introduced by Freud, is ‘one component instinct of sexuality which exists as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zone’ (16). Freud explained that schopophilia belongs to sexual instincts which naturally drive people independently to feel pleasure in erotogenic zone when looking objects that are sexually attractive. Then narcissistic aspect becomes the development of scopophilia in which spectator surrogate his sexual drive toward objects in the screen (18). This phase involve sexual imagination.

3.1.1 Schopophilia

Based on the observation of the writer, almost all of participants get pleasure by looking at Vindy Lee. Mostly, it is because of sexual appeal that she has like her breast, hip, eye, lips and buttock. Moreover, Lee’s sexual appeal is supported by provocative dress and sensual body language such as, her gesture, expression and the way she sits which indicate seduction and sexual invitation.

“Of course she is sexy. She also wears mini dress that shows her body contour which is slim, tall, light skin, with straight long hair, big breasts and buttock.”

(BY 24 y/o)

According to Singh and K Young (484-485), Marlowe (246) and Grazyna Jasienska et. al. (1214), female attractiveness is located in particular areas of body including breast, buttock, pelvis (hip) width or commonly called WHR (waist-to-hip ratio). These criteria are symbols for men about the ‘mate quality’ of female related to fertility and ovulation; the woman who has big breast and buttock is considered as more feminine and productive. At another point, Freud (cited in Mulvey, 16) states this is such a kind of voyeuristic activities of children that curious about private area which is forbidden and supposed to be closed.

It can be said that men tend to observe anatomy difference between them and others. In other words, men tend to look at woman’s body parts that are visually different from theirs. This case relates to the term ‘mirror phase’ from Lacan (Cited in Mulvey, 17). Mirror phase is a stage when children recognize their own image in mirror. In this phase ‘children physical ambitions outstrip their motor capacity’. They imagine that their reflection in mirror is more complete and perfect than their own body in reality. Thus, this will lead to recognition (own self) and misrecognition (outside self). Misrecognition here is regarded as superior and ideal ego.

Male viewers watching Vindy Lee as their misrecognition means that her body is different from their body anatomy. Additionally, when some participants said that they are attracted by Vindy Lee’s long hair, low voice tone and light skin, it confirms that men are "has not" person who are looking for ‘has’ person. "Has" person here refers to women who automatically have different body and characteristic.

Some of participants said that the curiosity and sexual instinct drive the male viewers to pay attention on Vindy Lee and it is supported by camera technique. Participants considered it as normal because sex is a basic need. They said that it is a natural instinct of men while looking at woman who has feminine attractiveness; they are surely curious and driven to gaze it. According to Peplau (37), men are sexually
more aggressive and higher in sexual desire than women; men more often think about sexual fantasy than women. Leitenberg and Henning (474) explain that it is influenced by hormonal difference between men and women in which men have higher degree of testosterone than the degree of androgen in woman. According to Lips (108), men have larger volume of hypothalamus-part in human brain which release hormones. Thus, it is easier to sexually attract men than women. In other words, men are more quickly in responding erotic image or symbol than women do.

“Usually, men will focus on the prominent aspect. Because the body of the host is attractive, it is supported by the camera which often shoots Vindy Lee in close up angle rather than the food, Vindy Lee automatically becomes the central in this program.”
(RZ 22 y/o)

Men also experience less erotic plasticity (sexual repression from culture and society) than women (Baumeister, 133). Usually, man easily can express it and start talking about sex and women will respond it. It is based on traditional gender role which claims that the role of man has to be more aggressive and decisive; on contrary woman should be passive and submissive (Tyson, 85). So, it does not matter if men like watching women who are sexually attractive because it is a personal drive in men’s ego. This is supported by the surrounding culture, society and media.

Mulvey also added that the cinema satisfies viewers by letting them explore their gaze into the objects on the screen. Commonly, cinema represents the human form, like face and body in order to create likeness and recognition among the viewers (17). Camera focusing on Vindy Lee’s cleavage uses close up and medium shoot in order to establish parasocial relationship- face to face interaction between audience and performer (Horton and Wohl’s, 215) and simultaneously satisfy men’s ego.

According to Tomlinson (54) and Chandler (193), close up shoot is used to increase the emotion and establish interaction and intimation and it also shows and expresses the emotion of character. It is proved by the explanation of several participants who confess that camera technique affects their perception and can stimulus their pleasure in looking. They are aware that this program is not merely culinary show but adult program exposing sensuality and sexiness of its host through how cameramen move and treat the object (Vindy Lee) to raise sexual attraction of men.

Additionally, because of its midnight broadcast and private setting, this program gives viewers private home viewing which makes them easier to receive sexual stimulation and voyeuristic activity. This case implies that male viewers are controled by camera and camera exactly knows the desire of male viewers. It can be claimed that phallocentrism, a term referring to how cinema represents men as the center and dominant (Liliequist, 57), and patriarchal concept exist in this program.

It can be argued that men are obsessed with breasts, buttocks and hip which also shows the existence of patriarchy among male participants in Surabaya. Woman, as sexual objects of men, remains passive. Based on theory of Male Gaze, participant’s opinion, and writer’s interpretation above, Vindy Lee is proved to become sexual object of male desire. The sensuality and sexiness represented by Vindy Lee can establish schopophilia-pleasure in looking among the most of male participants in Surabaya. It is caused by internal and external factor. Internal factor derives from sexual instinct of male and external factor comes from the media, especially camera technique and mise-en-scene.

3.1.2 Narcissistic aspect

Not only Schopophilia, but the writer also found indication of narcissistic aspect which occurs in several audiences’ (5 participants) mind after watching this program. The process of narcissist relates to how spectator identifies the image of male actor into his interest (Mulvey, 17-18). This program does not have male protagonist. However, several participants admitted that they experienced sexual stimulus toward Vindy Lee. In short, Vindy Lee is not only a source of pleasure for audience, but she is also displayed as object for further development of schopophilia; Narcissistic aspect.

“I think the goal is to enhance man audience’s imagination. The way Vindy Lee performs would affect the fantasy among spectators and his sexual desire towards his partner. Maybe he will imagine Vindy Lee as if she is his sexual partner in sexual intercourse and for sure, the image of Vindy Lee could increase male libido.”
Narcissistic form experienced by participants including fantasy and erection happened during the scenes when Vindy Lee ate her meals. She enters the spoon into her mouth and chews the food slowly. Her face expression and eye contact with the camera are considered as erotic and sensual according to participants. They realized that her expression is unnatural but challenging and attractive. Male viewers said that her expressions are too contrived and erotic; her expression is like an oral sex in a porn movie. Moreover, there was a participant experiencing mental imagery in which he transferred the image of Vindy Lee’s body as his sexual fantasy toward his wife to increase his sexual arousal and anticipate boredom when conducting sexual intercourse.

The writer correlates the perception above with sexual metaphor through food. Food in media nowadays is not only portrayed as daily consumption, but also to give pleasure; it ‘includes sexuality and food as a metaphor of desire and lust (Ronnie, 133). Kaufmann (cited in Marlene, 16) also added that “Gastroporn” (comparing pornographic movie with cooking or culinary show) in media shows that sex and food are fundamental human needs, so they complement each other.

Additionally, Sizemore (7) describes that there are similarities between food and sex which can repress men’s despair. In the journal of ‘Food Pornography’, McBride (38) argued that sensual image can be produced and gained through cooking show, for example, by the activity in which the female chef licks her fingers or uses seducing tone and eye contact with the viewers.

The combination of food and sensuality of eating then, can increase the sensuality of model or host. It is also proved by participants who admit that the sensuality of Vindy Lee appears when she tastes the food with a seducing expression and eye contact; they said that it seems like “Foreplay or Porn’s Scene.” It means that male participants are aware of this symbol or sexual metaphor (innuendo). Participants can imagine this scene and engage this image into the realm of their fantasy or experience in looking at other programs which offer image of foreplay. The writer considers that producer has managed this scene well; thus it could convey its message to the viewers.

However other participants (10 people) explained that they could get pleasure even sexual stimuli only if the object or women were appropriate with their criteria; in other words, definition of sexy and sensual is completely different from one person to another. On the contrary, if women presented in some programs are not proper with what men want or incompatible with their criteria, the women might only entertain and satisfy men’s curiosity, but never give the realm of narcissistic form. Almost all participants thought that Vindy Lee’s performance was excessive rather than natural. They expected natural sexiness of women.

“I’m not being provoked with the visualization and camera shoot. Women who use bulky and over make-up are not my criteria”

(RD 23 y/o)

Over makeup, oversize breast and buttock, and erotic expression of Vindy Lee are considered too much and they do not meet the criteria of sexy and sensual woman according to male participants in Surabaya. Consequently, this matter has made male participants do not want Vindy Lee to be their object of sexual fantasy. They chose Farah Quinn and Marinka as sexy and ideal women instead of Vindy Lee. Farah Quinn and Marinka are considered attractive because they offer natural Indonesian face and original size of breast.

It means that in the context of men in Surabaya, most of them still hold the traditional value and principle in which a good woman should act and perform normally and naturally rather than aggressively. Men in Surabaya demand natural sexiness of women. Proportional size of breast and buttock (without implant and plastic surgery) and natural make up make women sexy and increase men’s sexual desire and fantasy. In short, sexual stimulation according to participants not merely occurs on every image of sexy woman. However, it is subjective based on individual type.

3.2 Woman as the Signifier of Castration Threat.

JBT Culinary Travel Segment also embodied patriarchal concept. In that program Vindy Lee – as host and chef – is always represented as ‘signifier of male other’ which is positioned as bearer of meaning not meaning maker. JBT Culinary Travel Segment often exposes image of Vindy Lee as sexy figure by
focusing on her particular body parts. These parts are exposed to attract male viewers. Several participants claimed that this program exposes more sexuality than the culinary information. This can be seen on the way the camera shot the body parts of Vindy Lee and the way Lee dressed up. It means that phallocentrism exists in JBT’s culinary segment.

One of the participants has explained that the interesting part for men is when something seems more prominent than others. Vindy Lee’s body which is dominant according to participant makes them eager to look at it rather than others like the food. This image is supported by camera shot which uses close up techniques on several body parts of Vindy Lee like lips, breast and buttock. Phallocentrism stands on man’s authority using camera to represent what man is willing to see. However, women are exploited in different side and sexual imbalance is constructed among male viewers: men as subject and Vindy Lee as object.

![Image of Vindy Lee](image_url)

**Figure 1. Vindy Lee**

Participants said that Vindy Lee consciously let the male viewers explore her body as sexual object. Vindy Lee then, stands as the important figure or icon in this program. Her sensuality is displayed as commodity which could embrace the viewers especially men. The appearance of Vindy Lee is the way to steal the viewers’ attention, for example, by making direct eye contact with the audience when she eats, wiggles her hip, sits and talks to the audience. Those all simultaneously assert her as castration threat (make good of her lack) by exposing her physical attractiveness. However, this case strengthens the concept of sexual imbalance between men and women, between Vindy Lee and her audience; as object and subject, as passive and active.

When Vindy Lee eats her meal, she always gazes to the camera and makes eye contact with the audience. According to Williams (61), gazing means ‘to desire’. ‘Good girl’ (Tyson 89) usually tends to refuse to make eye contact with the camera to show her submissiveness and absence of desire. Differently, Vindy Lee dares to gaze the camera. It means that Vindy Lee wants to establish the intimate situation and awareness that she is being looked or gazed. At the same time, she creates the image of ‘Bad Girl’ who is characterized as aggressive and worldly. By showing her sexual desire through her gesture and performance, Vindy Lee is considered as sexual object or ‘bad girl’.

“I am very liable to deal with my guilt by categorizing women as either “like Mom” (“good girls”) or “not like Mom” (“bad girls”) and then by being able to enjoy sex only with women who are “not like Mom.” In other words, because I unconsciously associate sexual desire with desire for my mother; sexual desire makes me feel guilty and dirty, and for this reason I can enjoy it only with “bad girls,” who are guilty and dirty and whom I don’t associate with Mom”

(Tyson, 15)

However, based on finding, not all male participants in Surabaya see Vindy Lee as a full sexual object. They assume that Vindy Lee may become a sexual object and ‘bad girl’ but she could not establish sexual fantasy or stimulus. It is proved by less participant admit to experience narcissistic aspect by gazing Vindy Lee. The writer interprets that the concept of bad girl maybe the representation of women associated with male gaze and sexual symbol. However, bad girl here is contextual and specific, male participants expected natural sexiness and attitude rather than aggressive and excessive.
As stated above, when eating the meal, Vindy Lee makes several viewers to have image of oral sex activity in porn movie. This image indicates that Vindy Lee is obsessed with penis or in other interpretation, this scene portrays how Vindy Lee as passive object treats a phallus or as ‘Phallus worshiper’ (Libbon, 10). “I think she just commercializes her sensuality rather than professionalism. She does not give any specific explanation and she just focuses on her own sensuality and body language to attract audience and the waiter in that restaurant.”

(RD 23 y/o)

Vindy Lee is considered unsuccessful in promoting her culinary travel program. It is because she always explains little information of the food and she often speaks English when she talks to the viewers. In fact, not all audiences understand English. Participants added that the sexiness and erotic image of Vindy Lee make them focus only on her sensuality. This matter indicates that the castration anxiety appears in JBT’s culinary travel segment. According to Mulvey (21), ‘The male unconsciousness has two avenues of escape from castration anxiety’: (1) through punishment or saving guilty object (2) substitute woman into fetish object. Here, Vindy Lee is represented by producer as fetish object (2nd avenue), so that she is portrayed as powerless rather than dangerous.

From this analysis, it shows that male participants in Surabaya viewed Vindy Lee as sexual object and signifier of castration threat based on the way she performs. She indicates herself as a to-be-look-at and invites male desire to make good of her lack through sensuality. The Phallocentrism also exists from the intensity of camera shot that focuses on several body parts of Vindy Lee rather than food information. Simultaneously it confirms the existence of castration anxiety; JBT’s culinary segment constructs woman as fetish object in order to secure male power and authority (Djamal 48).

4. Conclusion

Based on participant’s opinion on ‘Jakarta Belum Tidur’ Culinary Segment, the writer concludes that this program is not purely culinary program. It is different from other culinary programs in Indonesian television channel. The distinction lies on its broadcasting, the target or the viewers, the sexy woman as presenter, and camera shot which emphasizes more on the sensuality of host than the food.

According to participants’ opinion, the sexiness of Vindy Lee is located on her breast, hip, lips and buttock. It is supported by camera movement which makes Vindy Lee looks flirtatious and seductive. Her image produces pleasure of looking (Schizophilia) among the participants. However, participants consider Vindy Lee’s appearance as excessive. Her oversize breast and bulky make up annoy audiences. Consequently, more than a half of participants do not experience sensual arousal or narcissistic form while watching this program.

Referring to the theory of Laura Mulvey and participant’s response, the image of Vindy Lee indicated herself as signifier of castration complex. Vindy Lee is positioned as the object of man’s desire through her sensual gesture and provocative dress to attract men’s attention. It strengthens the concept of sexual imbalance between man and woman, between Vindy Lee and her audiences; as object and subject, as passive and active, as the bearer of the look and the meaning maker.

It has also been shown that most of the participants in Surabaya see Vindy Lee’s physical attractiveness and performance as unnatural and excessive. Natural sexiness becomes important aspect or criteria for most of male participants in Surabaya. Thus, not all erotic images of women could make men sexually aroused. It depends on individual type. Based on finding the writer also concluded that many participants consider culinary program is no longer become woman interest. Food media nowadays help men to negotiate with culinary field by adopting some concepts related with adventure or challenge. Consequently, it is not weird anymore for men who watch culinary program.

5. Work Cited

Baumeister, R. “Gender and erotic plasticity: socio cultural influences on the sex drive” Sexual and Relationship Therapy 19.2 (2004): 133-139


Tomlinson, W., “Interactivity and Emotion through Cinematography” (1999): 1-77


Williams, L. “When the Woman Looks” (2001): 1-6
