The Role of Food Porn: Luxury Food Desire among Adolescents

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Abstract: Luxury consumption is excessively done by individuals to show off their wealth and success. Thus, social media platforms are enhancing their luxury consumption desire and showing off to others. The need for status, need for uniqueness, and attitude influences in a positive way towards food porn. The purpose of this study was to understand the new concept of food porn how it affects and mediates between the different relationships of an individual's personality traits and luxury food desire. The results have shown that the new construct food porn is mediating well between the NFS and LFD, NFU and LFD, and ATT and LFD. In the future, more work can be done to develop food porn theory and further see food porn in different roles.

Keywords: Food Porn, Need for Status, Need for Uniqueness, Luxury Food Desire, Luxury Consumption

1. Introduction

Consumers are of different types, and some love to show conspicuous consumption. This kind of consumption is associated with luxury branding, where people devour affluent goods. The same criteria can be used for luxury food consumption. Consumers tend to show off their conspicuous consumption on social media with the use of a particular brand logo (Kang & Park, 2016; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Brands with visible marketing tended to show more prominence and regarded as strong brands (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010). These days there is a lot of trend on social media by consumers to show off their luxury food consumption. For example, dining at a famous restaurant or a café and showing off amazing good picture qualities or videos on social media among friends, colleagues, and families. Consumers show such behavior as they believe it reflects their personalities. Such motivations in individuals make them present their good luxury consumption more visible (Han et al., 2010; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009). Individuals with high motivations and high need for status makes them show off more to others.

Previous studies have talked about status-seeking motives and the need for a uniqueness for good luxury preferences. This study will focus on the need for status, the need for uniqueness, consumer attitude towards luxury food desire with the effects of food porn. Food porn itself is a relatively new concept, and very few or hardly any literature is available related to it. We need to understand the idea of food porn first. This phenomenon relates to such consumers who either amateur or professional devotees like to create artistic images and style of pornography and display on different social media platforms (Greene, 2013; Lupton; McDonnell, 2016). Such consumers not only devour for luxury food at restaurants or café but also cook luxury food at home and regularly share, and upload their culinary homemade food experiences (von Pape, 2017). Consumers individuals personal motives, or goals in the form of a need for status, need for uniqueness, and
attitude can be vital elements for such conspicuous consumption (Baumgartner, Pieters, Haugtvedt, Herr, & Kardes, 2008; Roberts & Robins, 2000).

Hence, besides food porn a new construct, this study will also focus on individuals' personal motives such as the need for status and need for a uniqueness for luxury food desire. Food porn will act as a mediator for these own motives. The need for status and need for uniqueness are personality traits of an individual that lead to the association or connection with a luxury brand. Consumers need such status through luxury consumption and show off and compare their consumption with others to successfully signal the desired social status (Veblen, 1965). The personality traits are key predictors of purchasing behavior (Kassarjian, 1971) and can provide key insights related to food porn. Consumers use brands for their self-motives (Berger & Heath, 2007). Thus, they choose a brand that is connected with their personality (Sirgy, 1982). Consumers show tendencies with those brands that relate more towards their self-personality (Aaker, 1999; Govers & Schoormans, 2005; Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011).

Food porn can give a highlight of consumer personality traits when it comes to luxury food desire. Luxury food desire may perhaps relate to the need for status, need for uniqueness, and attitude with food porn as a potent mediator. The luxury industry and passion for it by consumers are growing, and brands are trying to find new ways to retain the customer base. Brands are introducing new techniques for consumers to fulfill their need for status, need for uniqueness, and attitude. Food porn, as said before, a new construct may provide insights towards the phenomenon of luxury food desire. The display and enthusiasm of consumers on social media platforms for luxury food is a new concept and is increasing day by day. Consumers are using all the social media platforms to display their desire for a status symbol, uniqueness, and attitude towards it.

This study will provide the basis for a new theory related to food porn. The mirror theory will help us to understand the food porn concept more under the social media platform, especially. Furthermore, 270 respondents were evaluated for the analysis of this new phenomenon through SEM on Smart PLS software.

2. Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

Need for Status

Consumers' motives are reflected through their personality, and personality has a status desire for luxury goods or brands. Luxury goods or products are those that provide immense passion, emotional wellbeing, and psychological reimbursements with high hedonic budding (Sung, Choi, Ahn, & Song, 2015). The status desire to be at the top may relate to the consumption of luxury products (Fujiwara & Nagasawa, 2015; Landis & Gladstone, 2017). The need for status may relate to luxury goods or products and may provide insights into this study about luxury food desire. And in previous studies, it has shown that the need for status does relate to luxury consumption (Fuchs, Prandelli, Schreier, & Dahl, 2013).

Consumer personality traits reflect in their purchasing behavior and other forms of life. Personality plays an integral part in the understanding of human psychology when understanding the purchase behavior of brands. The need for status tells us about human psychology how one wants to be at the top of the game. People tend to spend more money when they have the desire or to maintain social status. This need for status makes them spend more on buying different luxury brands. This study is focusing on luxury food desire so that it will provide insights for the need for status towards it with the mediation of the new construct food porn. For this, we propose the following hypothesis:
H1: Need for status has a positive effect on Food porn

Need for Uniqueness

One of another driver for luxury consumption of goods or brands is need for uniqueness (Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). The uniqueness can be of an inkling, make-believe, aesthetics, emotional state, activities, and principles (John & Srivastava, 1999). Consumers look for something unique in their lives that can be shown to others as part of their personality. More unusual, it is the better outcome they believe it will have when others see it. Individuals who have the character to consume luxury goods try to go for unique things. Thus, the need for uniqueness is an essential part of luxury consumption, and it may provide insights for luxury food desire with the mediation of food porn. The higher the desire for the need for uniqueness will result for novelty-seeking (Matzler, Bidmon, & Grabner-Kräuter, 2006).

Consumers who have the desire to try new things and seek novelty have a high sense of uniqueness and try to find ways to maintain their personality (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010). Consumers with a desire of need for uniqueness have shown expressing their personality in unique ways by luxury consumption (Snyder, 1992). Furthermore, uncommon luxury goods or brands use ways to highlight a certain sense of uniqueness (Jang, Ko, Morris, & Chang, 2015). The need for uniqueness may assert a positive impact on the consumption of luxury food desire. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: The need for uniqueness has a positive impact on food porn.

Attitude

Attitude is a reflection of emotional state or feelings expressed in different situations through the behavior of individuals (Fishbein, 1963; Premkumar, Ramamurthy, & Liu, 2008). The more experience is gained over time, and the attitude also takes its tone in development towards different things and people. Various theories have suggested that attitude is an essential factor when understanding the behavior of consumers (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980; Pee, Woon, & Kankanhalli, 2008). Previous studies have shown the association of attitude towards the adoption or willingness to use or desire to consume different goods (Chen & Chang, 2013; Hansen, Risborg, & Steen, 2012; Mehlaria, 2012). Attitude may also show positive results towards luxury food desire and even a direct effect on food porn. Food porn, as discussed before a new construct that may provide insights of the consumers who get emotionally attached with the desire to consumer luxury food because of the food pictures shared by others on the social media platforms. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Attitude has a positive impact on food porn.

Food porn, mirror theory of self and User-generated content

Food porn is a portrayal of fantastic good quality food images that inspire others to try delicious, luxurious, and scintillating food when shared on social media platforms. It influences others to try out the fantastic food pictures shared, and thus it is termed as food porn. In some cases, it is also referred to as gastro porn. The first time, the gastro porn term was used by Alexander Cockburn in 1977. Further, it was presented as a gastronomic trend in recent years (Cruz, 2013).

Further studies say that it was originated, or the food porn term used was in 1979 (McBride, 2010). Food porn means the description of the food itself in different social mediums (Kaufman, 2005). The focus of the study is to understand the phenomenon of food porn and luxury food desire. Here, the food itself is the focus of research as food porn, which is a new construct altogether used here.
Food porn represents pornography of food in unique ways that attract individuals to try different luscious and delicious food. Many articles represent food porn as an essential factor in today's luxury food consumption as it makes the consumer believe that food means touching, enjoying and feeling the food as part of an emotional state of the body (Probyn, 2000). The high-res images of food depict and influence consumers to look at the pictures again and click and like them and share further and try the luxury food that entices them (Lavis, 2017). The food porn concept may influence even an average consumer to go for luxury food desire because of its image quality and photography style as pornography. This idea of food porn is growing, and yet it has no theory development or any dimensions related to it. This study is first of its kind research on food porn that will talk about how it can influence consumers with status, uniqueness, and attitude towards luxury food desire. People associate themselves with food and sometimes define their personalities as food in a luxurious way (Hingston, 2018).

The only theory that is related or can be related to food porn is the mirror theory of self or the iMirror phenomenon associated with it. The mirror theory of self explains how individuals believe others view them (Lacan, 1977). Further, it can also be termed as how other's judgments reflect on oneself personality in terms of behavior, worth, and values (Kozinets et al., 2004). Previous studies have shown that how individuals use social media as a stage set to share their experiences of food (Kozinets et al., 2004). It presents how the love of food porn is shown to the world on social media, and it associates with one's individual personality traits. Thus, iMirror enhances the love for food porn through digital technology with one's self, luxury food consumption, and desire for status and uniqueness.

Another concept that can relate to food porn construct is the user-generated content (UGC). It can play an important role in devising food porn aspects. UGC refers to the material that is created by individuals and shared on different social media platforms to gain popularity and influence others (T. Y. Lee & Bradlow, 2011). Online reviews and forums with different photos and images may provide insights (Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010), and it may relate to understanding food porn. The online user-generated content may reflect in the development of future marketing strategies for brands (Robson, Farshid, Bredican, & Humphrey, 2013). It may well be inline in the event of food porn concept and luxury food desire.

Figure 1 shows the research framework of this study related to the need for status, need for uniqueness, attitude, food porn (in the context of mirror theory and UGC), and luxury food desire. User-generated content may influence consumers to try new products or services (Liu, 2006) and also persuade them to adopt the product if it entices them and may pay for it along the way (Brynjolfssohn & Smith, 2000). Individuals do pay attention to the detailed UGC of others shared online as it may provide status, uniqueness, and attitude towards a better experience of the product itself (Berezina, Bilghian, Cobanoglu, & Okumus, 2016). UGC may provide insights towards useful information related to luxury brands (Miyazaki, Grewal, & Goodstein, 2005). UGC can also play an essential role in the development of food porn theory and its effect on luxury food desire with status, uniqueness, and attitude. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H₄:** Food porn has a positive impact on luxury food desire

**H₅:** Food porn mediates between attitude and luxury food desire

**H₆:** Food porn mediates between the need for status and luxury food desire
H7: Food porn mediates between the need for uniqueness and luxury food desire

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**Luxury Food Desire**

The personality traits status and uniqueness and attitude persuade consumers to go for luxury living or consumption. It is said that in a world of capitalism, the success of an individual is always measured with financial wellbeing (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004; Richins & Dawson, 1992). The need for high status and uniqueness makes consumers spend more money on luxury consumption (Mason, 1981). Individuals with high-status consumption tend to think of themselves as first then others and make decisions according to it. It is said in previous studies that luxury consumption is considered as a symbol of wealth and success (Richins, 1994a, 1994b). Thus, in this study, we determine how consumption of luxury food desire is affected by the need for status, uniqueness, and attitude with food porn.

Culture also plays a vital role in developing behaviors of individuals as it reflects in their personality (McConatha, Leone, & Armstrong, 1997). Attitude acts more strongly in individual's behavior (Bagozzi, Wong, Abe, & Bergami, 2000; J. A. Lee, 2000). Luxury for desire is the main ingredient to show off wealth and success to others (Mason, 1981; Richins, 1994b). People with a high need for status and uniqueness tend to show off more in luxury consumption and tend to express as much as possible to others through different mediums. Food porn may well mediate between the relationship of status, uniqueness and attitude, and luxury food desire.

3. Methodology

**Results and Analysis**

We have applied the PLS-SEM analysis to calculate the hypothesized relationship between proposed constructs and dimensions. Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows researchers to include indirectly derived unobservable variables by indicator variables (Joseph F. Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). PLS-SEM consists of two models; The first is the measurement model, also called the outer model, and the second is the inner model or structural model.

**Outer Measurement Model**

Measurement model in PLS-SEM used to evaluate the internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Joseph F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Consistency assessment based on reliability tests, whereas convergent and
discriminant validity tests used for validity assessment (Joe F. Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). Variance caused by an observed variable measured by factor loadings and known as construct reliability and factor loadings 0.60 and above considered reliable. Factor loadings of items make sure that constructs are serving the purpose and measuring the same thing we intended to measure (Wynne W Chin, 1998; Joe F Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Results indicating the reliability and validity of the constructs of this study has been reported in Table-1. Loadings of all items are surpassing the minimum criteria of 0.60, as suggested by Hulland (1999), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability, also confirming the reliability of constructs and fulfilling the threshold level as claimed by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). On the other hand, the convergent validity of constructs evaluated by the value of the average variance extracted. Joe F Hair et al. (2011) proposed a threshold level of AVE that is 0.50, and AVE values of all constructs are greater than 0.50 threshold, hence confirming the convergent validity of constructs.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) defined discriminant validity as "how the constructs are different by each other in the context of the same model." Two popular measures have been suggested by the researchers and expert statisticians to evaluate the discriminant validity of constructs, one is the Fornell-Larker criterion, and the other is the HTMT ratio. Fornell-Larker criterion compares the inner construct correlation with the square root of AVE. The square root of AVE must be higher than the correlation values of the same column. Results reported in Table 1 confirming the discriminant validity of constructs of this study as the square root of AVE is higher than the correlation values.

Table 1: Fornell-Larker Criterion

|       | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Attitude     | 0.882 |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Food Porn    | 0.644 | 0.866 |       |       |       |
| 3. Luxury Food Desire | 0.616 | 0.628 | 0.896 |       |       |
| 4. Need for Status | 0.582 | 0.550 | 0.641 | 0.950 |       |
| 5. Need for Uniqueness | 0.618 | 0.555 | 0.655 | 0.561 | 0.868 |

HTMT ratio developed by Henseler and Sarstedt (2013) as a powerful tool to measure the discriminant validity, HTMT is based on Monte Carlo simulation, and acceptable values of correlation are 0.90. Table 2 illustrates the values of the HTMT correlation, and the highest value is 0.739, which confirms the adequate discriminant validity of constructs and reflects the acceptable quality of the outer measurement model.

Table 2: HTMT Ratio

|       | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Attitude     |       | 0.739 |       |       |       |
| 2. Food Porn    |       |       | 0.707 |       |       |
| 3. Luxury Food Desire |       | 0.709 | 0.707 |       |       |
| 4. Need for Status |       | 0.645 | 0.603 | 0.704 |       |
| 5. Need for Uniqueness |       | 0.707 | 0.611 | 0.734 | 0.606 |

The reliability, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and factor loadings has mentioned in Table 3.
Table 3: Reliability and Validity

|        | Loadings | α     | CR  | AVE  |
|--------|----------|-------|-----|------|
| ATT1   | 0.871    | 0.856 | 0.913 | 0.777 |
| ATT2   | 0.849    |       |     |      |
| ATT3   | 0.923    |       |     |      |
| FP1    | 0.900    |       |     |      |
| FP2    | 0.905    | 0.887 | 0.923 | 0.751 |
| FP3    | 0.905    |       |     |      |
| FP4    | 0.744    |       |     |      |
| LFD1   | 0.897    |       |     |      |
| LFD2   | 0.890    | 0.877 | 0.924 | 0.803 |
| LFD3   | 0.901    |       |     |      |
| NFS1   | 0.940    |       |     |      |
| NFS2   | 0.958    | 0.946 | 0.965 | 0.902 |
| NFS3   | 0.951    |       |     |      |
| NFU1   | 0.779    |       |     |      |
| NFU2   | 0.894    | 0.891 | 0.924 | 0.753 |
| NFU3   | 0.909    |       |     |      |
| NFU4   | 0.883    |       |     |      |

**Inner Structural Model**

Outer measurement model has been validated by the results, we now move towards the assessment of the inner structural model by evaluating the path coefficients, the significance of relationships between constructs, effect size, and overall model fitness.

**Path Coefficients and Significance**

Path coefficients in PLS-SEM and standardized beta confident in simple regression are similar. Beta coefficient β evaluates the unit variation caused by the independent variable in the dependent variable, hence providing insights to accept or reject the hypothesis. The higher the β, the more pronounced the effect of that particular variable will be considered on the dependent variable. Whereas only β value is not sufficient to decide upon the hypothesis acceptance or rejection, it is the T-stat that indicates the significance of the relationship. Therefore, the bootstrapping method has been applied to calculate the β coefficients and T-stat (Wynne W Chin, 1998). The results have been presented in Table-4 and explained below.

Table 4 illustrates the main hypotheses of this study. In H3, we proposed that attitude positively and significantly affect food porn. As proposed, the results in Table-4 confirmed that this relationship is positive and significant as depicted by the coefficient, T-stat and p values (β=0.408, T-stat= 4.214, p<0.001), hence H3 robustly accepted. Moreover, while observing the direct positive effect of the need for status on food porn, the results in Table-4 indicates that this relationship is positive and significant (β=0.207, T-stat= 2.379, p<0.05), hence confirming the H2. In H1, we observed the positive relationship between the need for uniqueness and food porn; results indicate that this relationship is positive and significant (β=0.187, T-stat= 2.518, p<0.05), hence proving the H1.
Table 4: Path Coefficient (Direct effects)

| Hypothesis | Path | \( \beta \) | \( SD \) | \( T \) Statistic | \( P \) Values |
|------------|------|-------------|--------|-----------------|-------------|
| H\(_3\): Attitude -> Food Porn | \( \beta \) | 0.408 | 0.097 | 4.214 | 0.000 |
| H\(_2\): Need for Status -> Food Porn | \( \beta \) | 0.207 | 0.087 | 2.379 | 0.018 |
| H\(_1\): Need for Uniqueness -> Food Porn | \( \beta \) | 0.187 | 0.074 | 2.518 | 0.012 |
| H\(_4\): Food Porn -> Luxury Food Desire | \( \beta \) | 0.628 | 0.061 | 10.24 | 0.000 |

Table 5 and Figure 2, on the other hand, presenting the indirect effects of the study or also called mediation effects. H\(_5\) is proposing that food porn mediates the relationship between attitude and luxury food desire. Results are confirming this mediation as the values are significant (\( \beta=0.256, \) \( T\)-stat= 4.043, \( p<0.001 \)). Likewise, a mediating role of food porn has been proposed between the need for status and luxury food desire, and this mediation has been supported by the empirical evidence provided by Table-5. Similarly, the mediation effect of food porn between the need for uniqueness and luxury food desire also confirmed by the results reported in Table-5.

Table 5: Indirect Effect

| Hypothesis | Path | \( \beta \) | \( SD \) | \( T \) Stat | \( P \) Values |
|------------|------|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|
| H\(_5\): Attitude -> Food Porn -> Luxury Food Desire | \( \beta \) | 0.26 | 0.06 | 4.04 | 0.00 |
| H\(_6\): Need for Status -> Food Porn -> Luxury Food Desire | \( \beta \) | 0.13 | 0.06 | 2.23 | 0.03 |
| H\(_7\): Need for Uniqueness -> Food Porn -> Luxury Food Desire | \( \beta \) | 0.12 | 0.05 | 2.28 | 0.02 |

Coefficient of Determination

This concept tells us the overall effect size and variance caused by independent variables and also the predictive accuracy of the model measured by the coefficient of determination (R\(^2\)). R\(^2\) values shown in Table 6, R\(^2\) for food porn are 0.480 depicting that 48% variance in food porn caused by the attitude, need for status, and need for uniqueness. Moreover, food porn causes a 39.4% variance in luxury food desire, as depicted by the R\(^2\) value reported in the below table.

Table 6: Coefficient of Determination

| Construct | R Square | R Square Adjusted |
|-----------|----------|------------------|
| Food Porn | 0.480 | 0.474 |
| Luxury Food Desire | 0.394 | 0.392 |

Goodness-of-Fit Index

The goodness of fit (GOF) index used to measure the complete model fit to verify that model is sufficiently explaining the data (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005). GOF index values range from 0-1, where 0.10 considered a small value to validate the model, 0.25 considered as medium value and 0.36 considered as large enough to confirm the global validation of research model and also indicates that model is parsimonious and reasonable (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). Equation-1 used to GOF index, where AVE measured as (Geometric mean of Average Communalities) and average values of R\(^2\) of all constructs (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). GOF value for the model of this study is 0.59, as reported in Table 7, which considered substantial and indicated a good model fit.
### Table 7: Goodness of Fit Index

| Variables               | $R^2$  | AVE  | GOF  |
|-------------------------|--------|------|------|
| Food Porn               | 0.480  | 0.75 |      |
| Luxury Food Desire      | 0.394  | 0.80 | 0.590|
| Need for Status         |        | 0.90 |      |
| Need for Uniqueness     |        | 0.75 |      |
| Attitude                | 0.44   | 0.78 | 0.80 |

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#### Figure 2: Structural Model with Path Coefficients

4. Discussions and implications

**Findings and theoretical implications**

The research framework is proven from the results. The mirror theory of self and UGC reflect well on food porn, and this new construct has shown positive results as a mediating role. The effects of H1, H2, and H3 are impacting positively on food porn and show significant results. Further, food porn also directly impacts luxury food desire and is showing significant results. Hence, we can say that food porn is playing a decisive role in the research framework. Thus, these variables may add value to the development of food porn theory in future researches. Need for status (Han et al., 2010; Landis & Gladstone, 2017), need for uniqueness (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010; Snyder, 1992) and attitude (Abimbola et al., 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980; Ueasangkomsate & Santiteerakul, 2016) do impact positively on food porn.

Furthermore, the research framework showed the role of food porn as a mediator. The relationship of food porn as a mediator between attitude and luxury food desire was positive, and results were accepted. The link of food porn as a mediator between the need for status and luxury food desire was also approved. And lastly, food porn as a mediator between the need for uniqueness and luxury food desire was also accepted. All the results showed positive and significant. Thus, the study shows that luxury food desire is highly practiced with food porn as a mediator in the situations for the need for status, need for uniqueness, and attitude.
Research limitations

The results favored the research framework, but still, it had few limitations. The results were based only on 270 respondents. The data was collected from one city in Pakistan. For future reference, more towns and respondents can be added. The study also had the time and budget constraints, and it was minimal. It is suggested that for future research, more cities to be added, and if possible, the examination should be taken to another country for a better understanding of an individual's behavior towards luxury consumption. The study was undertaken in the form of a cross-sectional study, and for future research, a longitudinal study may also be added as part of it. More theories perhaps can be taken in future research for a better understanding of food porn as a new construct. Further, food porn in future research can also be considered as a moderating role and see the results of how they behave towards luxury food desire.

Conclusion

This research framework supported food porn as a new construct. Food porn mediates well with the research framework relationships of need for status, need for uniqueness, attitude with luxury food desire. The mirror theory of self and UGC integrate well for food porn in the development of its variables and items. It may add value to the future growth for food porn theory. Food porn, a relatively new construct can be taken into account when studying luxury consumption and taken upon in different roles for future researches. Food porn showed significant results and can be used in future investigations for determining the luxury consumption of food.

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