Chapter 8

Performative Eating as Edutainment on YouTube:
Extracting Positive and Negative Learning

ABSTRACT

On the Social Web, on the leading social video sharing site YouTube, some of the most popular videos (with millions of views each) show "performative eating," described here as "consuming food as a form of entertainment." The performances occur in various locales and in various ways: Mukbang eating shows and their derivatives show individuals, pairs, groups, and families in feats of food and drink consumption. ASMR (autonomous [auto] sensory meridian response) eating videos show individuals and small groups eating copious amounts of food with an emphasis on listening pleasures. In restaurants, individuals and small groups take on (un)timed eating challenges. Outdoors, persons harvest food and prepare it, or they hunt wildlife and butcher the kill and prepare the animal proteins. Travel eating occurs in various locations around the world, with a focus on local specialties. The common denominator in these are spectacle. Viewed another way, performative eating videos are a form of edutainment, with positive and negative lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Entertainment "has been a part of all cultures" (Bates & Ferri, 2010, p. 1) and is thought to have been a part of the human experience from early days (Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015, p. 447; Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 361). Much entertainment occurs in streaming and downloaded ways, with many consuming entertainment media daily (Rigby & Ryan, 2016, p. 34). Entertainment is conceptualizes as both the pursuit of pleasure (hedonism) and the pursuit of personal meaning through values (eudaimonic), to meet various human needs and gratifications. "To be *entertained* is to be mentally occupied, or diverted. The concept is fundamentally about something 'holding' one's attention and interest with an end goal of pleasure or satisfaction" (Rigby & Ryan, 2016, p. 34). In some cases, entertainment may be about stress relief, forgetting the pressures of everyday life, socializing with friends, or learning about new topics,

among others. Entertainment (diversion, distraction) is a common pursuit in the modern age, so much so that humans have been described as a screen-watching animal.

Some researchers suggest that "enjoyment" (or the pursuit of fun) is at the heart of media entertainment (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004, p. 388) even as entertainment is understood as a multi-layered and complex construct. The effects of such media-induced enjoyment results in "excitation transfer, catharsis, learning" (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004, p. 393). The focus on learning as a constructive outcome from entertainment is important given the inherency of learning to human well-being. The learning here may refer to formal, accredited, and for-credit learning; nonformal, non-credit, non-accredited learning; and informal (indirect learning) from human activities without a purposive direct tie to learning.

Others suggest that "appreciation" might be another important outcome from media entertainment, based on "meaningful portrayals that focus on human virtue and that inspire audiences to contemplate questions concerning life's purpose"; in this construct, appreciation involves both affect and cognition; appreciation is related to the feeling states of "inspiration, awe, and tenderness" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011, p. 2).

For decades, those in entertainment have reached out to those in education, and vice versa, to try to strengthen each. "Edutainment" (education + entertainment was coined in 1948 by the Walt Disney Company. Later on came "entertainment-education" [a more contemporary term from the 1970s (Singhal & Brown, 1995, pre-p. 1)]. Entertainment integrated with education is thought to attract attention and make learners' experiences more memorable (Aksakal, 2015, p. 1232).

Entertainment-education is often in reference to prosocial messages and health messages (Moyer-Gusé, 2008, p. 407); this type of communication is seen as often indirect, such as embedded prosocial messages in "popular entertainment media content" (p. 408), intentionally or not (p. 409). Entertainment-education refers to onboarding a community to particular prosocial aims through strategic messaging. Traditionally, edutainment is conceptualized as combining "the methods of teaching and the form of game to attract students" (Wang, Tan, & Song, Nov. 2007) and often related to particular technologies and software (since the early 1990s) for "gamified" learning to make the learning more pleasurable, engaging, and fun. In higher education, various edutainment tools include "robotics, internet, games, movies, music, and television programs" (Pasawano, 2015, p. 946) in various blends, and these had positive learning outcomes. "Edutainment" has connotations of technology, the learning through playing computer games (Rapeepisam, Wong, Fung, & Depickere, 2006, p. 28). In this chapter, "edutainment" is considered more broadly as some form of entertainment with some learning value, whether or not the creator of the resource intended for the learning or not.

User-generated contents as entertainment but edutainment? On a mass scale, people have started entertaining each other, given the low costs of the respective technologies to create social videos and the many free sharing platforms for video and multimedia. The confluence of economic factors and technology ones has democratized the form of social videos, with a low cost of entry. User-generated contents now include "performative eating," described here as "consuming food as a form of entertainment." Peers have gotten into the game of entertaining themselves and each other.

Here are some common scenes from performative eating videos found on YouTube.

A father, mother, and son sit in front of a giant cauldron outside, and they eat off the lid: beef tripe, fried rice, chewy beef ribs, pig feet, pork belly, and other rustic homestyle-cooked foods. They wrap the foods in lettuce (or sometimes perilla) leaves and eat in large bites, often chewing the lettuce-wrapped food a bit before pushing the rest into their mouths. They twirl giant bundles of noodles on the ends of chopsticks and slurp those up with finesse. [The exaggerated slurps communicate enthusiasm for the

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