

Engendered Noises: The Gender Politics of Sensorial Pleasure in Neoliberal Korean Food Commercials

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Abstract : The roles of male and female in context of cuisine have developed into stereotypes throughout history. However—with Korea's fast advancement in politics, technology, society and social standards—gender stereotypes have become blurred. This is not to say that such stereotypes no longer exist for they still remain present in media and advertisements embedding 'idealistic' ideas into the unconscious state of minds of viewers. Many media outlets, especially commercials, portray males expressing pleasure of food [that they are advertising] through audible qualities generally considered 'rude' and 'unmannered' in the Korean society. Females, on the other hand, express such pleasures only verbally. This happenstance of a stereotype is displayed bluntly in instant noodle, namely ramen, commercials. This research explores the cultural significance of a type of audible gesture that can be found in Korean speech in which is termed the Fricative Voice Gesture (FVG). There are two forms of FVGs: the reactive and the prosodic. The reactive FVG is a legitimate form of expression while the prosodic FVG works as a speech intensifier. So, in order to understand this stereotype of who is authorized to express sensorial pleasure as a reactive FVG as opposed to a prosodic FVG, information has been extracted from interviews and dissected numerous ramen/instant noodle commercials and its appearances in other mediums of media. The commercials were tediously analyzed in all aspects of dialogue, featured contents, background music, actors and/or actresses selling the product, body language, and voice gestures. To effectively understand the exact impact these commercials have on the audience, each commercial was viewed with an interviewee. In this research, there were main informants whom were all Korean students residing in South Korea. All three interviewees were able to attend interview and commercial viewing sessions via Skype. This research, overall, focuses and concludes on Harkness's statement of how the reactive FVG is a recognizable index of the privileging of males for Korean culture norms and, in parallel, food commercials are still conforming to male ideals and fantasies.

Keywords : advertisement, food politics, fricative voice gestures, gender politics

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