



## Consumption of Sugar and Sweets in Movie Pictures Fiction: To Go Beyond Individual against Collective Consumers

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### Introduction

Sugar and sweets presence in movies have been presented in 349 fictitious films broadcasted in France during the last century. National and style of films particularities have been noticed: A relatively low rate in the United States of America and France explained by a low rate for action films (explanation for the USA and Japan), as well as social and sexual particularities: An under-representation of low classes for the first decades of the twentieth century, and of women until the eighties. Because movies statistics have been compared with consumption reality. Movie characters eat less sugar than real persons, particularly inaction movies. The fainting is a real surprise because the sugar consumption increased after test performances onto soldiers and sportsmen: characters very present in war, adventure or detective movies. Even it explains this is why the low classes are under-representation (lots of soldiers are low classes). Lamps of sugar, candies, ice creams, jams, chocolates are present on screen but fruits and cakes, together, represent 60% of the sweets in movie pictures. Fruits and cakes are the most represented because they are the most consumed for meals and by every social classes. Though, the missing sugar in movies may be explained by a moral value opposing collective against individual sugar consumption. The cinema carried that opposition with birthdays or weddings meals, feasts, on one

hand and individual consumption (even in collective rooms) on the other hand, until the fifties. After that the cinema showed sweet collective consumption without harmony, moral authorities encouraging individual consumption, giving relativity to the moral consumption of sweets. The cake example is particularly studied because esthetically it is adapted to collective or individual forms, from the white wedding cake to the small biscuit.

**Keywords:** Action films; Cakes; Collective consumption; Gap; Low classes; Individual consumption; Movie representations; National cinemas; Style of films; Sugar; Sweets; Women underrepresented

### The Sugar and Sweets Consumption in Movie Pictures

Sugar and sweets into 349 fictitious films broadcasted in France for a century. By sugar and sweets in fictitious movie pictures we mean cinematographic images of sugars and dishes with sugar as a first ingredient. We don't speak about sugar into salt dishes like strawberry soup, appearing into The Party (1968), the movie picture directed by Blake Edwards. This kind of recipe is apparently rare in movie pictures; even if we know that sugar is very used into salt dishes of food industry. But movie pictures rarely give the complete recipe

(the greek film *I epithesitougigantiaioumousaka*, from Panos H. Koutras give the mousaka recipe in 1999).Therefore they hardly ever give food industries' dishes ingredients (the 1976's French film *L'aileou la cuisine* from Claude Zidi is an exception). But the spectators are not able to know if there is some sugar into the salt dishes eaten on fictitious screens. The sugar that we've considered is both fructose and saccharose. Then we can watch sugar, fruits, fruit juice, chocolate, ice creams, candies, and jams on screen.

The corpus includes 349 movie pictures, broadcasted in France for a century. It is not a reflection of each national cinema. That hypothesis couldn't be investigated in practice because lots of movie pictures are lost (especially the silent films at 75%) [1]. Nevertheless most of national cinemas are represented in that corpus, even if the choice was made by French movie pictures' market. 68% of the corpus deals with the national phenomenon on sugar for both France and the United States of America. Because the majority of the movies broadcast in France come from France, America, Europe or Asia. From 1900 to the end of the seventies the films were chosen in the French encyclopedia of films Alpha. After that then, and until the end of the 2005, the movies were chosen into *L'année du cinema*, published by Calmann Levy. With the movies listing the percentage of each national cinema and style of films (comedies, wars, dramas, adventures, fantasies...) was calculated. Only documentaries were not taken into account. And below you can see the result was:

### Countries

France 41,7% America 26,8% Europe 26,8% Asia, South Sea Islands, Africa 4,5%

### Styles of Films

Dramas 25% Comedies 12% War films 9% Historical films 9% Adventure films 9% Cartoons 7% Musicals 7% Detective films 6% political films 6% Fantasy 5% Science fictions 3% Erotic films 2%

### Sugar Consumption

Comparison between the movies and the reality the movie food data from the corpus were compared with real food consumption data. The comparison with sugars and sweets give a 10% gap between movies (28% of food data) and reality (37.2%). The 28% movies food data mean that sugars and sweets were counted on the screen and classified by sex and social classes. To obtain the 37.2% real sugars and sweets we have taken the salt and sweetened data from the Planet scope, then we have calculated the ratio between sweets masses and total feed masses in the world [2]. Concerning sweets we have chosen the sugar, the fruits, the chocolates, the fruit juices, and the third of cereal plants for cakes. The salt was composed by 66% of cereal plants, vegetables, meats,

fishes and eggs. The Planet scope data were recent but we can't find long time statistics for every sweet product. For example the Olivier Londeix investigation about European biscuits gives financial statistics since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but masses statistics not before the 1950 years [3]. It means that we have feed images statistics older than commercial feed statistics.

Movie characters eat less sugar than real people. But the difference can be explained with those chronological data differences. We know that sugar consumption increased for the twentieth century [4]. But it would be untrue, because in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1910 and 1950, the sugar level is 35.8% in movie pictures. It means that less sugar is consumed on screen after 1950, when it increased in reality. The cinema feed data decline with the seventies generally speaking, but particularly with sweets. Meanwhile that low movie consumption isn't flat in each country and in each style of film. All these can explain the difference with reality.

## The National Cinema and Movie Styles Differences

### Countries

France 41,2% America 25,9% Europe 27,9% Asia, South Sea Islands 4,2%

### Style of Films

Dramas 27,9% Comedies 17,2% War films 4,9% Historical films 6,8% Adventure films 9,3% Cartoons 8,2% Musicals 10,2% Detective films 4,4% Political films 3,8% Fantasies 2,6% Science fictions 1,2% Erotic films 2,9%

The European countries (without France) possess higher sugars and sweets percentages than the ones of their general consumption. France is a little below and The United States of America and other world countries are lower than their general consumption. To be more precise, that last low level comes from Japan. The other countries without Japan are upper in sugars and sweets than their general consumption. Why the United States of America, Japan and in a fewer part France have got sugars and sweets are relatively low percentages? Because they cook differently. With the cinematographic styles we can observe that war, detective, fantasy, science-fiction movies are particularly poor in sugar; political and historic films too. It means that action movies are particularly poor in sweet food.

If fantasy or war films are poor in all kind of foods, salted or sweet, usually detective films show an important percentage of food (they are in a good average). With its 9.3% the adventure cinema seems an action movie exception. But 100 films are without any sugar, and 15 are adventure films, much more than its corpus share. If we add detective and war films

without any sugar we get 42 films upon the 100 (the double of their corpus part). It explains why The United States of America and Japan are below their corpus part with sugar, because low cinematographic styles are 47% in the corpus, but 56.6% in the American one and 57.1% in the Japan one. Why sugar is particularly missing in action movies? Eating is a passive action, a rest moment, and action movies don't show rest moments. It's true for sweets but for salt too. It doesn't explain the sugar particularity. There are social and sexual differences with sugar consumption too.

### **Sexual and Social Sugar Consumption in Movies**

In movie pictures most of sugar meals are consumed by men. This is a surprise because we know that women are greater sugar dishes consumers than men [5]. In fact in movie pictures men are greatest consumers for all kind of food, because there are more men characters in cinema than women. The difference between men and women for sugar is one of the most reduced. Women consume even more chocolates, sweets and ices than men. As the women, children are underrepresented in movies too. (There are working rights explanations of their absence). But Children are highest consumer of candies and ice creams than men. But there presentation of sweet foods for women and children is better than salty foods although it does not explain the sugar consumption difference with reality.

Social explanations give more credibilities, even if working classes are under-represented too. But that under-representation disappears in the mid-twenties. This is not the same thing with children and women, who have a long time of under-representation, (until the last three decades). The under-representation of popular classes for the first 20<sup>th</sup> century decades is an important fact. We know that the consumption of fruits of the working classes increased after 1930, and movies show that reality. But the consumption of fruits increased much more at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until 1930: from 102 kg of fruits and vegetables to 203 kg [6]. It does not appear in the movies pictures because the cinema of the 20<sup>th</sup> century first decade shows middle and upper classes more than working classes.

That social representation can explain the low percentage of sugars and sweets in action movies. Because if popular classes began to consume more fruits from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>, they began to consume more saccharine too, because of the experimentations onto soldiers and sportsmen in the United States of America, in France and in Germany. More sugar consumed by soldiers and sportsmen meant more energy and performance. While its consumption was encouraged sugar's absences are surprising in action movies. The more surprising is the fact that low classes are very present in war and adventure films (they play soldiers). The increase of low classes sugar consumption could have found a good way to

show it. How the missing sugar in action films can be explained?

### **Fruits and Cakes: Food of Harmony**

We have seen that fruits and cakes it cannot be because in action movies, because directors and producers do not want to show rest images (action films were not always as speed as they are today, and at the birth of talking movies, dialogues were frequents even in action films). And every kind of food in movies declined the seventies not only sweets (obviously not in movies specialized in gastronomy like Barbettes' feast from Gabriel Axel in 1987) while the technical innovations in movies cannot explain the lack of sugar for a century. Sweet feed categories can explain why they are missing in action movies. Cakes and fruits are the more consumed sweet food; they represent 60% in movies. They are the most consumed because they are sweeter food present for meals (with jams). And they are the most consumed with high level in every social classes. Even if cakes are more consumed by middle classes and fruits by upper classes. But the addition of low and middle classes is more important than upper classes by eating fruits. And the addition of low and upper classes for cakes is nearly to the middle class level. No other sweet food is socially divided, diffused. If middle class stay ahead for cakes this is because there are a few breakfasts with low classes, they eat fewer croissants. This explains why jams aren't out of classes, even if they are very present for meals. Because they're eaten at breakfast, and exclude low classes.

Fruits and cakes are the typical sweet food of harmony: because they are very present at meals, when everybody is here, and because they represent every classes. And the sociologist Claude Fischler underlined the importance of getting harmony with sugar food. He made an investigation which revealed that public opinion accepted sweet food when it is divided and not when it is a solitary pleasure [7]. The comparison between war, detective and adventure movies on one hand and drama pictures on the other hand is instructive interesting because dramas are the movie style with the higher level of food representations. The sum of war, adventure and detective films which get fruits for meals is 15, when dramas are 6. Though fruits are more eaten in action movies at meal than drama movies. But there are 54 fruits in drama pictures when they are only 47 in action movies. Fruits are a meal food for action movies, when they are a more individual consumption in everyday life. The situation is different with cakes. Action movie pictures meals are 8 emergencies when the dramas are 21. Cake harmony is more important in drama movie pictures. This mean that sugar harmony spend with cakes in everyday life and with fruits in action films, when the situation is more difficult. The difference of percentages between fruits for meals and general fruit consumption for action movies is the same than between cakes for lunches and general cake consumption with 68%. The emergencies difference between cake meals and total cakes is less

important (17) than between fruits for meal and total fruits (32). It means that cake meals are relatively more important than individual cake consumption in action movies (and individual consumption is important with fruits). And because meals are relatively important in action movie pictures by comparing with dramas, the fainting of action movie pictures with sugar is explained by individual consumptions. Soldiers, detectives may have individual meals with their ration, (adventurers don't have always tables to eat), cinema doesn't like to show them alone with cakes (even biscuits) or fruits.

The French rate, relatively low, is explained by a lack of cakes but with action movies relatively low too. French movies are more orientated towards everyday life but more in comedy style than drama one. And there are less cakes with comedy style than with the drama one but more fruits. Cakes are more important in drama movie pictures than comedy because they give a happy moment in stories unhappy or with a few moments of happiness. In comedies there are a lot of happy moments. It does explain why in the following examples of cakes in movie pictures there's no comedy.

#### **Individual or Collective Consumption: The Example of the Cakes**

In its first decade's cinema carted that difference between collective and responsible consumption on one hand and individual, selfish consumption on the other hand. In *Intolerance* (1915) an American movie, the director David Wark Griffith shows the biblical episode of the Cana wedding, with the wife who taste the first mouthful of cake given by the rabbi. The cake is for the family and the religious community. In the German movie picture *the last of men* (1921) from Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, the future wife prepares the cake and writes onto it "To every guest". They are the ethical good examples. Individual consumption of cakes are criticized. The moral warning may take the way of the esthetic, for example in *Gone with the wind* (1939), American movie from Victor Fleming. Rett Butler says to his wife Scarlett O'Hara, when she's guzzling with cakes, that if she's becoming as fat as her nurse he'll divorce. The arguments may be healthy too. In *The magnificent Ambersons* (1942) from Orson Welles, the mother of Amberson tells him to take care with his weight when he's eating a currant cake.

But with the fifties cinema began to give relativity to the moral which distinguish the good group and the bad individuality, changing the behavior of morality holderer. For example in *Monika* (1953), from Swedish director Ingmar Bergman, a family father comes back home with a cake because of their wedding birthday. But there's no group harmony because the father is drunk, he makes lots of noise, his daughter Monika protests, then he hits her. On the contrary two young girls come to the attorney office to testify in *I confess* (1953) from Alfred Hitchcock. The attorney gives them biscuits. In the American musical *Singing in the rain*

(1952) from Stanley Donen a cake of group harmony (a professional evening) hide individual pleasures because a dancer is hidden into it. With the sixties the group feast with a cake doesn't mean the morality of the group, for example in *The longest day* (1962), an American film from Ken Annakin, or the Italian movie *The damned* (1969) from Luchino Visconti, because they are Nazis groups. Moral authority owner lose their legitimacy too. For example in the American musical *My fair lady* (1967) from George Cukor, Higgins, professor of right ways, doesn't divide the cake with his pupil; he eats it and prefers giving the other share to his bird when his pupil makes progress. He is unfair.

The seventies are particularly interesting because Claude Fischler investigated the discourse about sugar in French press for ten years. He observed the violence of the discourse for that period. The common critics were present, the sugar negative effects on the health, dental caries, diabetes, infarcts, but the sugar was accused too in favoring young violence against their parents, car accidents, divorces. Sweets and cakes were particularly accused [8]. If we remark an increase of children sweets consumption for the period in movies, cinema pictures give a positive image of sweets consumers, particularly the individual ones. For example we see the journalist Carl Bernstein, who discovered the Watergate scandal, eating a biscuit by preparing his feature in *all the president's men* (1976) from Alan J Pakula. In *Three days of the condor* (1975) from Sydney Pollack, we see Joseph Turner, a secret agent, eating an individual pie at his office. He's going to discover a CIA plot. He is pursued by enemies. In a lift he is in company of a killer and a grandfather who brings a big cake for his family. The grandfather represents the traditional image of the group but he's not conscious of the danger that menaces his country. For the seventies the context gives relativity to the moral judgment of the sugar consumers. Though it means that in a same period the discourse about sugar and the representations of it don't say the same thing. There are not only a gap between movie pictures and reality sweet consumption but between some discourses and some representations too. Since the end of the seventies no one new sugar cinematographic motif appeared. But past representations faced each other's.

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