The Research on the Influence of Watching Mukbang on Chinese Social Networking Platforms upon the Appetite of Chinese Audience

Yutong Qin[1,a,*]

[1] *Communication, University of Colorado Denver, Denver, Colorado, 999039, America*
a. yutong.qin@ucdenver.edu
*corresponding author

Abstract: Owing to rapid speed of information dissemination by online media and the richness of information content, eating show which rises in South Korea has also become a kind of fashion in China. The research concentrates on the influences of Mukbang (eating show) on Chinese people and wants to get a deeper understanding of the media's impacts on the audience's thoughts and actions in the real world. The research is divided into six parts: Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. In the process of quantitative research, the study mainly collected questionnaires for analysis and sorting, and the samples were randomly selected to ensure the reliability of the survey results as much as possible. After studying, the result shows that compensatory psychology and increased eating volume are obviously related, while other psychological associations are not significant in the influences of watching eating broadcast under preset three different psychological states. In addition, the frequency and time period of watching can also have some impacts on appetite.

Keywords: Chinese audience, Mukbang, Appetite

1. Introduction

Although Mukbang, which means eating show online, is relatively familiar for people in China, it officially comes into the eyesight of most people owing to a popular event. A Chinese blogger dressed as a sailor was punished by law for her exaggerated performances and cruel treatment to state-level protected animals. The videos of her having a great white sharks went viral online and caused a round of discussion about the standard of Mukbang. Mukbang emerged in South Korea firstly. To be more accurately, it means eating broadcast which can show their whole process of eating to audience. The more popular it is, the more money the anchor can get. According to a Cincinnati woman called Kirklen, she becomes a millionaire through making eating videos online and gets profits from YouTube advertising money and selling things in the video [1]. In addition, Mukbang has also become a key word in Chinese people's life. People choose to watch the show at different times, especially young groups. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Mukbang is limited in its birthplace due to the relationship between Mukbang and obesity rate. According to Jin, Korean government points out that the increasing obesity rate of South Korean residents is clearly directed to watching eating show [2]. Promulgates relevant management measures including "Do not overeat

in the eating broadcast" and "Do not appear high-calorie food recommended". The action of Korean government indicates the intimate connection between Mukbang and appetite. According to Xu, there is actually an obvious relationship between unhealthy condition and Mukbang because such eating show will convey an idea that eating too much is not harmful [3]. Thus, based on the habit of watching Mukbang, this research will study how psychological factors affect the appetite of such eating show audience, so as to further explore the impacts of media on people's real life. Because of Internet security and political reasons, Chinese people have many difficulties to use YouTube or other American software. Therefore, instead of doing research on some overseas software, the study limits the platforms to do more accurate research. The platforms the study chooses are TikTok and Bilibili which are both popular and useful in China. For analyzing, the data will be comprehensively analyzed by SPSS, combined with questionnaire survey and literature analysis. The independent variables are the different psychological factors of audience, including curiosity, comfort and compensatory psychology. The dependent variables are the amount of food consumed at one meal and the undergraduate meal frequency (such as midnight snack). A total of 100 samples were collected for quantitative studies in people. Based on the control of age variables, the study focus on the effects of Mukbang on eating show audience. According to the survey results, 60% of people watch at weekly frequency, and 50% will choose the related eating category according to the content of eating show. Eating show does not affect the eating frequency and disposable eating amount of most people. However, about 40% of people are affected by eating and increase the amount of eating. By comparing the body weight data one year ago and one year later, 42 people showed a rising trend on their weight, accounting for 50.93%.

2.   Literature Review

According to Kircaburun and his partners, the Mukbang means a person opens his or her camera to broadcast the process of eating online. In addition, the anchor will also interact with audience during the show on the Internet [4]. Mukbang originated firstly from Korean "food reality show" program from 2014 to 2015, in the form of eating live at home, and viewers will give some rewards according to how much they like the food broadcast. As the eating show gets more and more popular, Mukbang blogger becomes a job with high income around the world. The most obvious characters of Mukbang bloggers are their theatrical performances, high calorie eating and the great appetites. One of the most famous bloggers is Yuka Kinoshita who has 5.15 million fans. In a video, she can eat 137 Philippine bananas. The platforms on which people can watch related videos are various including YouTube, Bilibili, Twitch, and TikTok. Most people in China will choose TikTok or Bilibili because of convenience and the study will start by focusing on the two stations. The study will start from the Chinese audience group of eating show, using the theory of media dependence for further research.

According to Britannica, media dependency theory, which was put forward by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleuris, a kind of systematic study on the relationship among audience, media, society and impacts [5]. The core idea is that the audience relies on the information provided by the media to meet the needs and achieve the goals. The theory takes the media as an integral part of the "audience-media-society" system, believing that the more a person relies on using the media to meet the needs, the greater the influence that the media has on the person. The research will apply the relationship between audience, media, and influence in this theoretical system. The psychological factor when people choose to watch Mukbang is actually can be seen as a goal. Through people try to meet the urgent needs of these psychological factors, people rely more on the media. Therefore, the media will play a more important role in people's life and then profoundly affect people's life, including cognition and behaviors.

According to the related material on website called Core, problematic Mukbang watching was positively associated with both disordered eating and internet addiction [6]. The citation indicates the positive relationship between Mukbang watching and appetite. Combined with the questionnaire survey, the result shows that 40% people have a trend of increasing weight. That means Mukbang watching indeed can influence weight and appetite of people.

Regarding the impacts of psychological factors on people's appetite when watching Mukbang, an article mentions compensatory psychology. According to Strand, many users think Mukbang watching can limit their eating and they use it to restrict their eating. They put forward the idea that if they watch the show, they will feel no need to eat because the anchor has already eaten instead of them [7]. That means compensatory psychology has negative impacts on appetite when watching Mukbang. Combined the collected data, people with compensatory psychology tend to eat less food or eat as normal because they meet their desires through looking the process of eating on the Internet. Therefore, the hypothesis C is right.

Another article also mentions the impact of comfort psychology on appetite when watching Mukbang. According to Balta, problematic Mukbang watching was positively related to loneliness because people can connect with the society through the interaction with anchor on the Internet. Thus, people will fell less lonely. However, there is no obvious evidence on the relation between loneliness and appetite when watching Mukbang [8]. The material just shows the relationship between comfort psychology and watching Mukbang. Combined the survey, people who have comfort psychology tend to have normal amount of food and the frequency of eating during the interaction with the anchor.

According to Kamal and his partners, they use Food Addiction Scale (YFAS), The Emotional Regulation Difficulties Scale (DERS) and Solitude Scale to find the relationship between emotional regulation food addiction. The survey shows that food addiction symptom counts were positively associated with difficulty in engaging in goal-directed behavior, difficulty in impulse control, lack of emotional awareness, and limited acquisition of emotion regulation strategies [9]. The survey shows the exact relationship between psychology factors and food addiction. That means comfort psychology this survey focus may have some influences on people who watch eating show.

According to Di, different motivations will affect the actions after people have watched eating show and all the choice reflect the reality in the society including the spiritual condition of people [10]. Psychology factors are also one of motivations and the material further explains from the side that the psychological activities will have an impact on people watching eating show. As the material mentioned, the survey can not only get a result on the effects of eating show, but also can learn more about the people's current emotional and spiritual needs.

According to Kamal and his research partners, loneliness positively predicted food addiction (P =0.002). The related research found that etiology of food addiction, as multiple aspects of emotion dysregulation, including difficulty in engaging in goal-directed behaviour, impulsiveness, emotional awareness and limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and loneliness were related to influence the development of an addictive behaviour towards certain types of food [9]. That means the psychological factors are closely related to appetite. Therefore, the research will study the impacts of different psychological factors on the appetite of audience based on watching Mukbang. There are three kinds of hypothesis in the research. It is a remarkable fact that the psychological types in the hypothesis are for reference only, which are several types that may be closely related to Mukbang.

Hypothesis A: The curiosity psychology of audience when watching Mukbang is positively correlated with the amount of food eaten at one time, and it is negatively correlated with the frequency of audience eating.

Hypothesis B: The comfort psychology of audience when watching Mukbang is positively correlated with the amount of food eaten at one time, and it is negatively correlated with the frequency of audience eating.

Hypothesis C: The compensatory psychology of audience when watching the food broadcast is negatively correlated with the amount of food eaten at one time, and it is negatively correlated with the frequency of audience eating.

3. Methodology

The research is developed by using the questionnaire survey which is published by Wen Juanxing. Wen Juanxing is a kind of survey software in WeChat, and it is convenient for Chinese people to complete. The period of collecting the data is one week. There are totally 102 questionnaires in the research, and they are all available. There are two policies to define available questionnaires. One is whether the answer in the questionnaire is the same and the other is whether the answers have obvious rule. The samples are selected randomly and published through circle of friends which is a kind of room in WeChat.

4. Results

Firstly, the main method of the research is questionnaire survey, and the survey uses the control variable method to collect data in order to avoid the influences of other variables. All the samples are audience who favor eating show and watch the eating show regularly. Moreover, the samples were selected randomly. The samples are selected from various universities instead of only one university. The action can add the scope to which this conclusion can apply and increase the credibility of the findings. Finally, the samples are abundant and representative. The total sample size was 100 so the probability of matching the study results with the reality is high.

The objects of the study are audience who watch eating show regularly and the samples are selected randomly. The obvious characters of them are having a good command of technology so they are the target audience of eating show. They can search and watch Mukbang on various network platforms easily.

The survey collects data on watching frequency, the time when watching Mukbang, psychology when watching Mukbang and appetite. The research gets the final results from setting a data model with data analysis. The research sets a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Model by using SPSS to study the relativity between the different psychology when watching Mukbang and the appetite. It can be seen from the chart that the correlation coefficient of curiosity psychology when watching Mukbang and the amount of one-time eating is 0.227. It is a kind of weak correlation coefficient. In addition, the correlation coefficient of curiosity psychology when watching Mukbang and eating frequency is 0.366. The two kinds of data show that curiosity psychology does not have a great impact on the amount of food.

The correlation coefficient of comfort psychology when watching Mukbang and the amount of food eaten in one-time is 0.552. It is also a kind of weak correlation coefficient. Moreover, comfort psychology when watching Mukbang has a weak correlation with eating frequency. The exact data is 0.547. The two kinds of relationship show that comfort psychology does not have a great impact on the amount of food.

Although the first two typical psychologies were weakly associated with food intake, compensatory psychology was strongly correlated with food intake. According to Pearson's correlation analysis, the correlation coefficient of compensatory psychology and one-time food intake was 0.022, which was a significant correlation. But the correlation coefficient of

compensatory psychology and eating frequency is 0.402 which was considered a non-significant correlation.

5.   Discussion

Therefore, the model that compensatory psychology has an obvious relationship with increasing appetite. In spite of the psychology, there are also some other factors which will influence food intake of people, such as the time when people watching eating show, the frequency people watch the show and even the character people have. Compared to comfort psychology and curiosity psychology, the study finds the compensatory psychology plays a more important role in increasing appetite of people. The result is related to the time and the frequency people will watch the eating show. By analyzing the data, most people who have compensatory psychology are found to watch during the mealtime and watch more times. The questionnaire shows that 58% people who participate in the survey tend to watch the eating show in a week and they tend to choose the answer on increasing appetite. They want to eliminate the feeling of hunger. However, The more frequency people watch, the bigger influences on the appetite of people. The condition will cause obesity and many other diseases.

In addition, the research finds that 37% people choose to watch the eating show when they have food intake and 62% people choose to watch in other time. The time have strong relationship with compensatory psychology. More people choose to watch the show because of their compensatory psychology so can they meet the need of having food. Therefore, they increase the one-time intake when they have food. The survey also find that the weight of most people is increasing although the weight even changes 1-2 kilograms or there are other factors that can influence the weight. The slight change is seen as normal, but the increasing eating will also have more probability to cause obesity, high blood pressure and many other health problems.

Except for the reason why compensatory psychology when watching eating show will increase the appetite, there are also some technological reasons. As the development of Internet, people spend more time on electronic products. They will not only impact the minds people in the virtual world, but also the real world. When people are watching the eating show, they are also influenced by the thoughts of anchor on eating greasy food without restraint. Then they tend to eat more and eat much greasy food in the real life. People, especially teenagers, will be influenced deeply owning to the long time they expose under the technology.

Although compensatory psychology when people watch eating show will have more influence on the health problems, the original problem is Internet. The measurements to prevent the bad effects should be divided into two parts. One is technology and the other one is regulator. In the survey, the time and the frequency people watch will influence the results. Therefore, the related platforms, such as Bilibili, should limit the time people watch in a week or a day. For the regulator, limiting and checking the content of the eating show is necessary. The shows which are related to high calorie food and no restriction on eating should be forbidden. In addition, local government can also publish some laws on eating show, such as the action of Korean government.

6.   Conclusion

The survey focuses on the rapidly growing eating show industry and observes the influences of such media on people. Research shows that with the development of network technology and people's increasing dependence on media, network media has an increasing influence on people. Media will not only affect people's thoughts, but also affect people's choices in the real world. In the process of transmitting information to people, eating show conveys a kind of idea of unrestrained eating, and then lays the foundation for influencing people's eating choice and appetite. This study mainly

focuses on the influence of three psychological motivations when watching eating show on the appetite of people. The study has shown that compensatory psychology is the most significantly associated with the appetite of people, which means that audiences with compensatory psychology subconsciously have a more obvious desire and motivation to eat more. However, owing to some bad influences of eating show, people have risks on having some health problems, such as overweight. Therefore, some technological companies and local government should take actions to regular the eating show market. Let them be a kind of enjoyment, but not murder.

References

[1]   A. Kirklen, "I'm a multimillionaire": Cincinnati woman is eating her way to internet fame, Nowcast, 2020.

[2]   L. J. Jin, Rethinking mukbang: Does watching people eat help or hurt us? The New York Times, 2018.

[3]   W.Z. Xu, DOES WATCHING MUKBANGS HELP YOU DIET? THE EFFECT OF THE MUKBANG ON THE DESIRE TO EAT, Cornell University, 2019.

[4]   K. Kircaburun, V. Stavropoulos, A. Harris, F. Calado, E. Emirtekin, M. D. Griffiths, Development and Validation of the Mukbang Addiction Scale, International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 2020.

[5]   L. Yang, media dependency theory, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015.

[6]   K. Kircaburun, C. Yurdagül, D. Kuss, E. Emirtekin, M. D. Griffiths, Problematic Mukbang watching and its relationship to disordered eating and internet addiction: a pilot study among emerging adult mukbang watchers, Core ac UK, 2020.

[7]   M. Strand, S. A. Gustafsson, Mukbang and Disordered Eating: A Netnographic Analysis of Online Eating Broadcasts, Culture, medicine and psychiatry, 2020.

[8]   K. Kircaburun, S. Balta, E. Emirtekin, S. B. Tosuntas, Z. Demetrovics, M. D. Griffiths, Compensatory usage of the internet: the case of mukbang watching on YouTube, Core ac UK, 2004.

[9]   A. Kamal, H. Regina, E. Tatsi, A. Turvill, Emotion dysregulation and loneliness as predictors of food addiction, Core.ac.uk, 2019.

[10] Y. J. Di, Research on the viewing motivation and influences of online eating and broadcast programs, Chengdu Sport University, 2022.