A STUDY ON POTENTIAL HEALTH ISSUES BEHIND THE POPULARITY OF

"MUKBANG" IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Mukbang, in which people broadcast themselves eating large quantities, started to enter the Chinese market around 2014 and gradually became popular. In this thesis, by analyzing the encodings of mukbang videos on Kuaishou, the shared themes across videos were discovered. Also, the decodings of mukbang videos by viewers were examined so as to figure out their different attitudes and emotions toward mukbang videos and mukbangers. Findings suggested that mukbang videos and its viewers have built up a complex relationship. Pursuing the thrill of hunger, vicarious eating, emotional establishment, and relieving anorexia were found as main reasons the viewers choose to watch mukbang videos. However, some viewers also expressed their shock, even disbelief on unusual food intake. Others expressed their desires on owning a slim figure that never becoming overweight even overeating. This thesis also argued that mukbang has indeed caused a certain harmful impact on the perception of eating norms and eating behaviors of some viewers.

Keywords: mukbang, mukbang videos, encoding/decoding, eating norms, social media, health issues

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INTRODUCTION

As of 2018, there were more than 200 million users posting videos on Kuaishou[1] of which 11% were about food, ranking third in all topics (Kuaishou Big Data, 2019). Food-related videos continued to grow in popularity, with 600 million food-related videos were posted in the first three quarters of 2019, accumulating more than 20 billion likes and more than 80 billion hours of playback time (Kuaishou, 2019). Mukbang videos, in which people broadcast themselves eating large quantities, have been especially popular.

Mukbang originated in South Korea in a platform called Afreeca TV[2] around 2010 (Sacasas, n.d.). The term "Mukbang" comes from a combination of two Korean words, meaning "a broadcast where people eat" (Choe, 2019; Kang et al., 2020). Unlike regular people eating at home or in restaurants, a host (mukbanger) shows the process of eating food in front of the camera of mobile phone, while the audiences watch it online and send their comments via live chat (Choe, 2019; De Solier, 2018). The performer usually consumes a large quantity of food, much more than an ordinary adult could eat. High-quality video, good lighting, high-speed network, and even the choice of food helps drive traffic to mukbangers' sites. The popularity of the mukbang can be considered as a cultural phenomenon (Kang et al., 2020; Pereira, 2019; Choe, 2019). At the same time, critics have argued that mukbang could encourage overeating (Jaureguilorda, 2019). The Ministry of Health and Welfare of Korea started to develop guidelines and established a monitoring system for mukbang in 2018 to prevent the raising obesity rate in South

[1] Kuaishou, developed by Beijing Kuaishou Technology Co., Ltd in 2011, is a Chinese app for video sharing.
[2] AfreecaTV, owned by AfreecaTV Co., Ltd., is a P2P video streaming service in South Korea.

Korea (people.cn, 2018). Mukbang is not yet mature in China, and its content has not attracted the attention of relevant Chinese departments. Therefore, this measure from South Korea provided a reference for Chinese mukbang.

Despite the popularity and influence of mukbang culture, little research has been conducted in this area. The thesis examines the content of Chinese mukbang videos, as well as audience responses. Specifically, using encoding/decoding theory as its theoretical framework, this thesis answers the following research questions: How is the process of eating constructed in mukbang videos? How do people talk about eating? How do people talk about the influencers; To what extent does viewing mukbang videos encourage people to talk about changing their dietary habits? Textual analysis is the method to examine nine selected mukbang videos and 135 comments. This study explores how eating presentations are constructed and interpreted in this new space.

BACKGROUND

The Development of Mukbang in China

Mukbang started to enter the Chinese market around 2014 from Korea and gradually became popular (Cao, 2017). Some Korean scholars believe that the reason why mukbang is born and popular in Korea may be related to Korean food culture. They point out that Korea has a culture of eating together (Kang et al., 2020; Wenzel, 2016). However, with the change of generational landscape and social environment (e.g. job pressure, or family size), Koreans usually are unable to eat with their families (Cho et al., 2015; Anjani et al., n.d.). Therefore, mukbang has become an alternative that can meet this cultural need for communal eating and can eliminate the feeling of loneliness (Kang et al., 2020; Lavelle, 2018). Also, mukbang can make audience feel a satisfaction through

visual and auditory stimuli, which is similar to "food porn" (Pereira, 2019; Choi, 2015).

Furthermore, mukbangers stimulate the audience with the sound of eating, the amount of

food, the appearance of meal, etc. (Kang et al., 2020). However, in addition to that,

Chinese people has their own unique food culture (Du, 2011). "Food is the first necessity

of the people" or "people regard food as their heaven" (民以食为天) is a widely

spreading saying in China. Chinese people put food in an important place in their lives, as

it is closely linked to Chinese society and culture (Zhang, 2005). For example, most of

Chinese people consider food as a way for regimen, and they follow the traditional

culture to select daily food that are both delicious and healthy (Zhang, 2005). Even

acquaintances say hi with each other use the sentence of "Have you eaten yet?" which

has the similar meaning and effect as "How are you?" in American English (Bian & Gao,

2004). From this point, Chinese audience's love of mukbang is due to a subconscious in

terms of culture (Li, 2018; Zhang, 2017; Cao, 2017). Li (2018) conducted a questionnaire

to acquire the answers why some Chinese users like to watch mukbang videos: (1) the

psychology of seeking novelty; (2) loneliness and companionship; (3) relieving stress; (4)

self-identification and self-actualization; (5) and social needs and cultural identity.

     With the development of mukbang in China, it has extended a variety of ways to

show the process of eating. Live streaming and short-recorded videos are the main

formats (Cao, 2017). Kuaishou, a Chinese video sharing app that focuses on live

broadcastings and short video, was established by Beijing Kuaishou Technology Co., Ltd

in 2011 (Kuaishou, n.d.). During a live broadcasting on Kuaishou, viewers can show their

likes to broadcast jockeys (BJ) by purchasing virtual gifts. In live broadcasts, mukbangers

eat a large amount of high-calorie foods such as fried chicken, burgers, cakes, etc., while

responding to the viewer's real-time message in a timely manner. Sometimes, they also share their own daily lives. In the live broadcasting room of mukbangers who ranked top 30, the number of viewers can generally reach 10,000 to 20,000, while top 10 can reach up to 100,000 or more at the same time. For mukbang short videos, the top ten mukbangers on Kuaishou have an average number of likes above 10,000 (Kuaishou Big Data, 2019).

In China, mukbang has already become a profession. Some mukbangers even have professional teams to create and promote their work. The income for mukbangers are generally from their audience and ad sponsors; some mukbangers also gain money through selling their own brand products (Matthews, 2019). For example, one of the most famous mukbanger in China named Maomeimei (猫妹妹), who has around 30.6 million fans, earns more than hundreds of thousands of Yuan (1 dollar = 6.9 Yuan) per day through audience's reward and advertisements (Tencent, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Related studies on mukbang are quite few since it is a fairly recent phenomenon. However, scholars have studied the content of mukbang videos (Kang et al., 2020; Gillespie, 2019; Wei, 2016). Kang (2020) and colleagues found that about 83.5% of mukbang YouTube videos belong to the category of overeating. At the same time, more than 90% of mukbang YouTube videos show that the food mukbangers eat are take-away foods, usually purchasing from convenience stores and restaurants. In terms of food choices, 15.7% of mukbangers choose to eat fast food or junk food, and about 5.6% of mukbangers are eating extremely spicy or irritating food (Kang et al., 2020). For the performance of mukbanger, Gillespie (2019) revealed that mukbanger used words, facial

expressions, body language, and sound (chewing and crunching) to describe the deliciousness of food for their performances. Wei (2016) divided the content of mukbang videos into four categories. The first category is challenging eating unconventional food or large quantity of food, such as extremely spicy food or hundreds of eggs. The second type is to share their daily meals. In this type of video, the food mukbangers consume is usually ordinary that most people can easily cook or buy. The third is to stimulate the viewer's audition by highlighting the sounds of chewing through mini microphone. The last one is to evaluate food. By tasting different kinds of food, mukbangers will share their feelings, and sometimes may give recommendations of food to their viewers. However, most of mukbang related studies more focus on the interaction between viewers and mukbang videos.

Audience studies shed light on why people watch mukbang videos. Literature suggests that people may view mukbang videos to help ease social isolation (Kang et al., 2020; Pereira, 2019; Choe, 2019). With the development of the modern society, more and more people live alone and feel lonely, which has led them to consider viewing mukbang as a means to indirectly obtain a virtual eating companion and to connect with others in terms of emotion and psychology (Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015; Hong & Park, 2018; Choe, 2019; Donnar, 2017; Spence et al., 2019; Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015). Audiences usually watch mukbang during mealtime (Hong & Park, 2018). Similarly, Choe (2019) argues that mukbang provides a sense of collaborative eating, which can enhance a feeling of co-presence. Donnar (2017) discusses the concept of "food porn," arguing that help those, who seek companion and partner for eating, foster a sense of community and closeness. Also, Hong and Park (2018) argue that audiences view

mukang as their "meal mate" (p. 118). Spence et al. (2019) argue that mukbang provide audiences a sense of digital commensality, which can facilitate online social and eliminate loneliness.

Mukbang videos also provide viewers with social connection. Bruno and Chung (2017) argues that audiences can gain a kind of vicarious pleasure from watching mukbang because they can socialize and communicate in this public online sphere. Specifically, mukbang provides a space for the audiences where they can feel the social presence of each other through chat rooms, comments and likes, even though they do not know each other in the real life. This online communication is important to both mukbang and the audience, because it can affect not only the popularity of mukbangers but also the moods and attitudes of the audiences (Bruno & Chung, 2017). The audiences would decide whether to follow this mukbanger depending on the online interaction (Song, 2018). Anjani and colleagues found that viewers selectively consume mukbang videos, generally according to their own preferences for food or the personality of mukbanger. Mukbangers appeal to viewers by showing their personal charm (e.g., appearance, personality, etc.) in their comments (Bruno & Chung, 2017). In addition, some viewers consider watching mukbang videos to be a private activity, unwilling or rarely actively sharing with others. At the same time, some viewers consider mukbang as a "mealtime companion" or a "leisure activity" (Anjani et al., n.d.). Also, Bruno and Chung argue that these online interactions created a kind of empathy between audiences and mukbangers which is more important for some audience than eating itself (Bruno & Chung, 2017).

In addition to seeking virtual partners for eating and overcoming loneliness, audiences also want to seek entertainment by watching mukbang. For example, Choe (2019) argues that some audiences can get a sense of satisfaction through the eating sounds of mukbangers. These sounds enhance the telepresence of the audience (Woo, 2018). Choi (2015) argues that mukbang can make audience feel a satisfaction through visual and auditory stimuli, which is similar to "food porn" (Donnar, 2017; Pereira et al., 2019; Choi, 2015). Schwegler-Castañer (2018) points out that audience can get sensory satisfaction and gain amusement through mukbangers sharing their eating experiences. Except to gain a sense of satisfaction and entertainment, Hakimey and Yazdanifard (2015) argue that to reduce the stress of life is also one of the reasons that people want to watch mukbang. Similarly, Bruno and Chung (2017) claim that audiences watch mukbang to escape the sense of guilt and unpleasant reality, as well as to avoid the pressure to gain weight.

In addition to the above reasons, some audience studies have provided different explanations for the popularity of mukbang. Some researchers point out that viewers see mukbang as their vicarious eating (Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015; Choe, 2019; Gillespie, 2019; Bruno & Chung, 2017). Through watching the eating experience of mukbangers, the audience can gain the visual and auditory stimulation, which thus replace the need for eating in real life. Lim believes that mukbanger eats a large quantity and wide variety of foods, which brings viewers the pleasure and satisfaction of vicarious diets, she calls that "second-hand" eating (Lim & Lee, 2019). Tu and Fishbach (2017) examined the vicarious satiation phenomenon. Specifically, viewers would consider mukbanger's consumption of food as their own, and then they would experience alternative satiation. It

can result in delayed consumption or abandonment of what mukbangers have already consumed. Gillespie (2019) proposes the concept of eating fantasy, which is to imagine eating as much as possible without having to act. Viewers realize their eating fantasy by treating mukbangers as their own eating agents.

Challenging Existing Female Body Images

Some scholars note that the birth of mukbang is a challenge to existing social norms and aesthetic standards in terms of body image and health. Especially in South Korea, a society with the ultimate pursuit of female beauty and health where the concept of plastic surgery is generally accepted, and female celebrities are required to follow strict diet plans (Han & SturtzSreetharan, 2017; Fuhr, 2016). The popularity of mukbang, famous for the food quantities and overeating, is undoubtedly a challenge to the existing social norms in South Korea. Lim argues that mukbangers' unlimited appetite can release people physically and psychologically from the stresses of the social norms and standards around body and healthy (Lim & Lee, 2019). In terms of female body image, different scholars have different opinions. Through the lens of male consumption, Schwegler-Castañer state that male viewers are consuming female mukbanger through platforms like YouTube (Schwegler-Castañer, 2018). Under the constraints of social norms, "Overeager appetite" is a social taboo for female that they are fear to be revealed (Geis 1998, p. 217):

> Invariably, several [women] recount stories of "first dates" during which they scanned the menu for something that would be easy to eat inconspicuously, picking a salad or chicken breast for fear that devouring a plate of spaghetti would expose an overeager appetite and would risk stains and spills and messiness; only later, still hunger and safely away from the judging eye across the table, would

they open the refrigerator and stuff themselves with cold pizza, ice cream straight

from the carton, anything deliciously gooey and sloppy (217).

Also, Bordo conveys that female hunger is a kind of "discipline" shaped by society. In

fact, female is eager to eat indulgently, so they usually eat in secret:

> The representation and denial of hunger central to features of the construction of
>
> femininity and set up the compensatory binge as a virtual inevitability. Such
>
> restrictions on appetite, moreover, are not merely about food intake. Rather, the
>
> social control of female hunger operates as a practical "discipline" (to use
>
> Foucault's terms) that trains female bodies in the knowledge of their limits and
>
> possibilities. … really feel rewarded by a bite-sized candy, no matter how much
>
> the chocolate "wallop" it pacts. In private, shamefully and furtively, we binge
>
> (130).

Mukbang not only provides an acceptable way for female to eat a lot in public but also a

"vicarious and voyeuristic" window for viewers (Geis 1998, p. 217). Gillespie points out

that mukbang videos guide viewers to consciously or unconsciously pay more attention

on female's diet. Although many viewers enjoy watching binge eat, they still regard them

as transgressive acts (Gillespie, 2019).

Negative Effects of Mukbang

Some audience studies point out that watching mukbang videos may cause health-

related problems. Videos with cooking and eating content pay more attention to the

appearance of the food than other qualities. Contemporary food culture has inspired

viewers' desire through the widespread practice that depict the attractive qualities of food

(Lupton, 2018). Most of the food that shown in YouTube videos that created by

mukbanger is unhealthy (Chu, 2018). Spence et al. (2019) argues that the audience's consumption norms was affected by mukbang, causing the audience to imitate the way mukbanger eats. Generally speaking, mukbangers consume a large amount of high-calorie food at one time, and the audience would more easily eat more than normal levels of food. Similarly, Hong and Park (2018) claim that mukbang can affect viewers' food choices, leading that they tend to consume some unhealthy fast foods, high-calorie food, as well as spicy and oily foods. Mukbanger on YouTube hopes to gain high popularity through the performance of overeating and "stimulating content" (Kang et al., 2020). It turns out that YouTube content that shows overeating or unhealthy eating habits does get more traffic (Kang et al., 2020). Some scholars point out that distribution of food-related content through the media will encourage overeating (Bodenlos & Wormuth,2013; Boyland et al., 2011; Halford JC, 2008). Donnar (2017) believes that mukbang disrupts the relationship between food and hunger and points out that it further exacerbated some social problems, such as eating disorders and obesity. In Kang et al.'s study, they confirm that among the participants who never or rarely watched mukbang videos, more than half of them said that "mukbang have little or no effect on their health habits". In contrast, more than half of the heavy viewers of mukbang said, "mukbang mostly or strongly impacted their health habits" (Kang et al., 2020). Some previous studies have shown that children are easily affected by food-related performance (e.g. Advertisements, TV shows, social media, etc.), which in turn induces overeating (Sadeghirad et al., 2016; Lioutas, 2015).

Overall, many previous studies have focused on the cultural connotations of mukbang's popularity and the challenges to traditional female body image concepts. Only

one study mentions the health effects that mukbang may cause (Kang et al., 2020). Although that article is a quantitative study, it still supports the research entry point of current study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mukbang video is a type of mediated communication, usually encoded by creators of video images and decoded by viewers, which is similar to television. Hence, the encoding/decoding theory is applicable for current study both on the mukbang video itself and the constructed meaning interpreted by viewers. Stuart Hall is the most influential theorist in the field of audience research. His "encoding and decoding" theory within the context of television, published in 1980, has always played a crucial role in audience research field (Shaw, 2017). To this day, his theory is still studied and cited by many scholars. The main arguments of his "encoding and decoding" are: Encoding and decoding are socially constructed within a certain cultural context. Mukbangers' encoding of their video should be easily acceptable and recognizable by the viewer. However, there is no necessary consistency between encoding and decoding. Even if creators of a visual image may have provided a "preferred reading" to viewers, viewers may not follow inevitably from what producer intend them to decode (Pace, 2008). In another word, viewers actively construct meanings in the process of communication (O'Donnell et al., 2008). As Hall stressed, "Since each has its specific modality and conditions of existence, each can constitute its own break or interruption of the 'passage of forms' on whose continuity the flow of effective production (that is, "reproduction") depends" (Hall 1980, p.163). Specifically, there are three hypothetical positions where the audiences encode the message: "dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position

and oppositional position" (Hall 1980, p.171). Dominant-hegemonic position means viewers follow exactly what "dominant" or "preferred" code intended, which is the ideal model for video image creators. Hall believes that decoding within negotiated position "contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements…" (Hall 1980, p.172). Viewers who are in the oppositional position indicate that their interpretation of a given discourse are on a completely reverse track. They may find alternative framework instead of preferred code.

Compared to a broadcasted message, some scholars believe that YouTube provides viewers with a fertile ground to decode the TV material with their individual interpretation and publish online, in the form of text, images, and videos (Pace, 2008). Also, some scholars argue that video media like YouTube provides an opportunity for viewers to consume relevant texts. "The text might be read in any number of ways depending upon which of the intertextual fragments of the video the viewer has seen and how her or she relates to those fragments". Hall's encoding and decoding theory offers a theoretical basis for this asymmetry of decoding (Savoie, 2009).

Based on Hall's encoding and decoding theory, Fiske (2000) broadens the concept of the audience. He suggests the boundaries between individuals and text cannot be oversimplified and artificially distinguished. The text and the viewer are not completely independent of each other. In the process of decoding, part of the television text may be determined by the its viewers who play an authorial role (Fiske, 2000).

Other relevant studies in the field of communication show that "inscribed reader" or an "implied audience" has come along with any media text (e.g. Booth, 1961; Chatman, 1978; Hall, 1980). Some scholars argue that social and economic relations have

shaped both coding "preferred reading" by text producers and decoding text by individuals. Also, they posit through the intervention of site controllers and gatekeepers, video platforms like YouTube also adhere to the dominant cultural values and norms (Pauwels & Hellriegel, 2009).

Savoie (2009) criticizes Hall's three hypothetical positions. He believes that the only three hypothetical positions limit the discussion of the content of YouTube-like new video media on lacking "the interpretation of the multiplicity of 'personifications' of viewers/decoders and the multifaceted media experiences an individual can have online" (Savoie, 2009). This argument may be applied to current study when observing viewers' opinions toward mukbangers and their eating. Since this thesis focuses on personal experiences and feelings of viewing mukbang videos. Mukbangers constructs mukbang videos by encoding the content, and then viewers establish affective connections with mukbang by decoding the video content.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions focused on the content of the mukbang video and viewer responses:

1. How is the process of eating constructed in mukbang videos?

2. How do people talk about eating? How do people talk about the influencers?

3. To what extent does viewing mukbang videos encourage people to talk about changing their dietary habits?

METHODOLOGY

The texts of mukbang videos, the follow up comments, and the intersection between mukbangers and viewers were analyzed (per the procedure given later) to

explore the relationship between mukbang videos and viewers' perception of food and health. Textual analysis is the systematic examination that helps researchers "understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live" (McKee, 2003, p. 1). In other words, researchers use textual analysis to understand how people make sense of certain texts within particular cultures or time period (Rholetter, 2018). Texts here can be considered as: magazines, newspapers, films, TV shows, online content, lyrics, radio shows, etc., any mediated communication that has been recorded or preserved or even T-shirt, piece of furniture and so on (McKee, 2003). Hartley (1992) likens texts to forensic evidence. He argues that forensic science attempts to restore the crime process by evidence left behind it, even though nobody has witnessed it. It is analogous to researchers rely on certain texts to track the process of people interpret and people make meaning from within specific historical periods or cultural backgrounds. "the material reality [of texts] allows for the recovery and critical interrogation of discursive politics in an 'empirical' form; [texts] are neither scientific data nor historical documents but are, literally forensic evidence" (Hartley 1992, p.29). Hence, viewers' comments can be treated as "forensic evidence" that help track the viewers' practices of interpreting and reconstructing meaning for mukbang videos.

Sample

This thesis examined popular mukbang videos on Kuaishou. This platform has two main formats: short previously recorded video posts and live broadcasts. Only focuses on pre-recorded, since they likely have higher viewership because compared to live broadcasting, short videos have less time limit and can be watched at any time. The

top three most-followed mukbangers were the focus of this research: Maomeimei (ID: 爱美食的猫妹妹), Langweixian (ID: 大胃浪胃仙), A Hao (ID: 大胃王阿浩). The top three most-viewed videos released in December 2019 for each mukbanger were examined, totally nine videos.

To examine audience interpretation of mukbang videos, the top fifteen comments of each selected video were analyzed. Overall, to better answer the research questions, a total of nine edited videos and 135 comments toward selected videos were analyzed.

Brief introduction of Maomeimei, Langweixian and A Hao

Maomeimei posted her first food related short video on kuaishou in 2016. As of January, she has reached 28.6 million followers. Basically, she sets about six to eight dishes at every live broadcasting to eat, which can easily feed 10 people or more. For example, she has successfully challenged eaten 100 dumplings as her single meal. She and her fiancé revealed in one of their live broadcasts that Maomeimei once spent up to 270,000 yuan ($ 38,558.76) on meals in one month. She pays more attention on live broadcasts than short videos. Her live broadcast time is fixed, generally starting at nine pm every day and lasting one to two hours. In January 2020, the number of likes for each posted video was more than 100,000, and the number of comments for each video ranged from 400 to several thousand. As of January 2020, a total of 370 videos were posted.

Figure 1. *Maomeimei's mukbang video*

Langweixian (ID:大胃浪胃仙) has achieved a very high fan growth efficiency

because of his distinctive personality of "I want order everything on the menu." His

account once gained 3.72 million followers in one month. At the same time, his account

has an average daily increase of more than 100,000 fans. Langweixian's rapid popularity

has caused the industry's attention to the field of mukbang (Kuaishou, 2019).

Langweixian released his first food video on October 2018. As of January 2020, he has

reached 20.5 million followers. His account is not a personal account but created by a

professional team. His account more focuses more on short videos, he posts his short

video daily. But the live broadcast time is more flexible. In January 2020, the average

number of likes per video was more than 200,000, and the number of comments per

video fluctuated from seven thousand to tens of thousands. As of January 2020, a total of

278 videos have been posted.

Figure 2. *Langweixian's mukbang video*

A Hao posted his first food video on November 2017. As of Janurary 2020, he has

reached 12.5 million followers on Kuaishou. His account is a private account which

belongs to A Hao himself. From November 2017 to August 2019, the content of his

videos is similar to the Maomeimei's, which seems like a simple preview of his coming

live broadcast on the same day. At this time, his short video usually includes a display of

the food that will be eaten in his coming live broadcast, a notice of the time of his live

broadcast, and a food eating performance in a limited time. By then, the length of his

short videos were no longer than one minute. From September 2019 to present, his videos

have begun to transform. The content of his video shifts to recording the entire process of

challenging eating a huge amount food. His live broadcast always starts at 7 pm every

day. Generally, his live broadcast lasts one to two hours. Most food he eats on his live

broadcasts are home-made dishes or currently trending foods online. In January 2020, the

average number of likes per video was more than 200,000, and the number of comments

per video was about 10,000. As of January 2020, a total of 974 videos have been posted.

Figure 3. *A Hao's mukbang video*

Operationalization

This study examined both content and interpretation of mukbang videos. To answer the first research question, this thesis analyzed the construction of mukbang videos through examining the lighting, video shooting components, editing, sound (including chewing or crunching) and overall aesthetics. Additionally, the dialogue, text, quantity, positioning, and variety of food, the physical attributes of the mukbangers and other characteristics were studied. To answer the second and third research questions, viewers' interpretations of mukbang videos were studied. This study looked at viewers' comments. Specifically, the number of likes, text, tone, and overall attitudes and

emotions were studied. These analyses aimed to explore the association between mukbangers' encoding and viewers' decoding so as to discover the potential health issue relating to the mukbang videos.

FINDINGS

This thesis mainly examined the research question through two aspects: the first is the analysis of the encodings of the selected mukbang videos. The second is the analysis of the selected comments.

The Overall Process of Eating Constructed

The overall process of eating in Maomeimei, Langweixian and A Hao's videos are similarly constructed. They all purposely encode lighting, scene setting, site, shooting equipment to create an ideal condition. At the same time, when shooting, they all focus on the portrayal of personas and food. In order to meet the needs of video content, they also pay attention on editing.

However, the structures of Maomeimei, Langweixian and A Hao's videos are totally different. Maomeimei's short videos are usually used as a trailer for her live broadcast, informing viewers that the broadcast is ready to go and showing the food that will be eaten on her live broadcast. As a result, the short videos she posts do not often have a storyline. Moreover, these short videos are not complete, usually only showing one to two minutes of her eating, trying to drive traffic to her upcoming live broadcast. Beginning her eating performance, Maomeimei always introduces the name of the dishes first. By manually moving the food closer to the lens or zooming in, Maomeimei uses big close-up shots to capture the first bite of food. At the same time, big close-ups are also applied throughout Maomeimei's eating process.

Rather than just a performance of eating a lot of food, the style of Langweixian's videos is more humorous. His short videos are strong in storytelling that always have scripts. Therefore, his eating performance is usually part of the plot rather than all. Not only are his short videos super professional in storytelling, but also can match up with real-time trending topics. At the beginning of each video, Langweixian always directly states the theme of it. The theme of three selected videos are: "Let's count together, how many kinds of breakfasts can I order in Chongqing," "If friends are telling you the truth" and "What do my family and friends think when I don't answer the phone?"

A Hao's videos are about "challenges," which means he always orders more than ten of the same kind food and challenges to eat it up. Most of A Hao's videos follow the same basic process: briefly introducing the selected restaurant, ordering food, interviewing the attitude of other people towards A Hao in that same restaurant, and the eating performance.

Settings for the Videos

Although the videos of the three selected mukbangers all have preliminary preparations before shooting, subtle differences still exist. In the pre-production of video, Maomeimei focuses more on the construction of a home-like eating environment. By using intense soft light, not only does the skin of Maomeimei looks translucent, tender, and vibrant, but also the color saturation of the food is high, highlighting its great quality and freshness. At the same time, the warm white is the main tone, which imitates the color of lighting at home. She once revealed in her live broadcast that most of the time she recorded short videos or conducted live broadcasts at her company instead of at home. Also, her shooting location is always indoors. However, it is difficult to tell

whether she sits at the office desk rather than the kitchen table because of her excellent scene setting. The carved wooden chair she sits on implies that she is at a kitchen table instead of an office desk, because most Chinese people would not set such style of chair in their office, but usually arrange them around the kitchen table. At the same time, the decoration style of the background wall behind her is similar to that of some Chinese families. Being placed on the tea table in front of the background wall, the two pots of brightly colored plants and the lamp with gentle light set off a warm and comfortable home atmosphere. The two cute teddy bear toys sit next to her, accompanying her while she eats. Those two cute teddy bear toys also stare at the food, playing the role of friends or family members. It can be said that Maomeimei is committed to creating a scene of "dining at home."

Langweixian's videos are pretty regional. He is from Chongqing, China, and the filming sites are also located in Chongqing. Most of the filming sites are at local restaurants or on the street. What can be noticed is that Langweixian does not deliberately create scenes, probably because films in restaurants, where is recognized as a place for serving meals. Similar to Langweixian, A Hao usually shoots videos in restaurants or on the street, with the witnesses of other customers or passers-by. At the same time, A Hao's shooting scenes are not artificially arranged. However, it is undeniable that rather than arbitrary restaurants, the shooting locations of Langweixian and A Hao are carefully selected to satisfy the needs of their video contents. The lighting in both Langweixian and A Hao's videos are not as markedly encoded as in Maomeimei's videos.

Mukbangers' Appearance and Personas

The three selected mukbangers are different in shaping their personalities. In sample videos, the personality of Maomeimei can be described as cute, sweet, and pure. That may also be related to her age, as she is in her twenties. Her makeup style is simpler. Pink and orange eyeshadows and blushes are often used to make her look youthful. She always slicks her hair back into a half-up, half-down style with a bow tied on it. Straight hair and low ponytail are also her most commonly worn hairstyles. Cute accessories are also indispensable for her, such as star-shaped pearl-inlaid earrings, hair ties with Pikachu, and various lovely hair clips. Her dressing style is more casual. In the three sample videos, she wears a white sweater with bow tie, a black and white striped sweater, and a Sailor Moon white hoodie. In short, Maomeimei has established an image of sweet girl next door through encoding of her natural and casual look. Also, because of this, the viewer's attention to her appearance may be reduced, shifting to the food itself or the process of eating to some extent. Of all the 45 sample comments about her, only two are about her appearance: "Does anyone think that Maomeimei's hair style without bangs looks better?" and "What a pretty makeup Maomeimei wears today!" Also, Maomeimei's body image is petite and slender, in sharp contrast to the large quantity of food in front of her.

Her eating performance plays an important role in connecting elements in the video and interacting with viewers. It can be seen that while chewing the food, Maomeimei's facial expression responds to the stimuli of food tastes at any time. When she encounters food that she likes, she squints her eyes slightly, raises her eyebrows and curves up the corners of her mouth to express the happiness. Also, she nods while

enjoying the pleasure brought by the food or gives her thumbs up. Sometimes after swallowing, she makes the "wow" sound to express her admiration, and then using her cute voice to share her feelings with viewers, such as "Not greasy at all, super delicious," "Super tender," "Yummy," "Here is the cartilage part, so good!" Usually, at the end of the video, she invites viewers to watch her live broadcast at 9 pm. It is worth noting that Maomeimei always wears a mini microphone to capture and amplify the sound of her chewing and swallowing. By encoding the food experience in detail, the sense of pleasure of the food is exaggerated, which stimulates the illusion of the taste of the food and provokes the viewer's desire for food. Like some commented, "I really enjoy watching you eat, which can raise my appetite," which got 75,000 likes. "I want to eat everything after watching you eat," which got 430 likes. Overall, Maomeimei has constructed a personality of sweet, cute, and non-aggressive by encoding makeup, dressing, action, facial expressions, voice, and words. Also, in terms of interacting with viewers, Maomeimei likes to share her feelings about different food with viewers.

As a male, with shoulder-length hair and a slightly harsh voice, Langweixian's gender always causes discussion and controversy. However, Langweixian never tries to clarify this in his videos. Like Xiaoqiao commented, "I still want to ask Langweixian, are you female or male," which got 33,000 likes. This could be considered as one way that he made himself topical. Also, because of this, one of his personalities is constructed by the blurring of gender.

The narrative style of Langweixian's videos is dramatic. Although the three sample videos narrate around different story lines, the style of them are the same: humorous and funny. Instead of being himself, Langweixian always plays the role shaped

by the script, who always bring joy to the viewer. Therefore, another personality of him is humorous and funny. Also, he actively interacts with the viewer. For example, At the end of his video posted on December 8, 2019, he asked his viewers, "What do you like to have for breakfast?" With this straight questioning, Langweixian successfully led the viewers to the discussion of breakfast, like some commented: "It must be super happy to have breakfast in this way," which got 993 likes. "Your breakfast is a little expensive," which got 226 likes.

Wearing black leather jacket, dark blue jeans, and black leather shoes, A Hao always shows his masculinity to the viewer. At the same time, the main theme of "challenge" in his videos also highlights his masculinity. And in each of his videos, he always asks the same question: "Do you think I can finish all the food on the table or not?" In fact, he has never failed on a challenge, which also helps him consolidate his personality of masculinity. For A Hao, what he enjoys is not the matter of eating, but the feeling of conquering.

Food Arrangements in the Videos

As the essence of mukbang, the choice and arrangement of food plays a decisive role in the popularity of the video. Most of Maomeimei's videos are about eating a large quantity of homemade food. In the three sample videos, it is obvious that most of the food that Maomeimei shoots is different. In her video posted on December 6, 2019, she had about twenty to thirty large oysters, five pounds of homemade Sichuan style pork belly, two pounds lemon-flavored spicy chicken feet, two cups of 500 ml bubble tea, three pounds of cherry tomatoes, two quarts of taro ball with milk (a kind of Chinese dessert), one medium bowl of salted green beans, and a bundle of green onion. On

December 15, 2019, she had about four pounds of crayfish, ten large pieces of kimchi fried dumplings, four Yangcheng Lake hairy crabs, four cream puffs, one chocolate covered croissant, a whole roasted chicken, a large bowl of noodles with soy bean paste, one plate of stir fried bok choy with garlic sauce, thirteen pieces of steamed rice with meatballs, and a cup of 500 ml yogurt. On December 30, 2019, she had six pounds of sweet and sour ribs, a bundle of green onion, and a 1L of tea. Although these foods listed above are different, there are still have some common characteristics. The food in Maomeimei's video is mainly seafood and meat, with trendy desserts and drinks on the side. Vegetables appear in the video rarely or in small servings. By using high angles, all the food on the table can be shown on the screen at the same time. Also, in her video, food always takes up half of the screen. In terms of the arrangement of food, meat and seafood are always put in large and conspicuous containers. Unlike other dessert and appetizer, meat and seafood are usually placed in the middle of the screen.

In Langweixian's videos, the food he eats the most is hotpot, which is also Chongqing's famous cuisine. In the video posted on December 8, 2019, he ordered ten kinds of food: eight steamed buns, a regular bowl of noodles with peas and meat sauce, a regular bowl of rice noodle soup, twelve pieces of steam dumplings, a regular bowl of sliced noodles, a regular bowl of spicy wonton soup, a regular bowl of rice porridge, four cornmeal buns, twelve plates of Sichuan style steamed pork belly with pickled mustard leaves, and a bottle of water. The food in front of him was eaten up one by one while the empty plates piled on the table were getting higher and higher. In the video posted on December 21, 2019, Langweixian ate at least thirty different kinds of dishes in a Chongqing Hotpot restaurant, among them almost twenty dishes are about meat, with no

vegetable shown in this episode. On December 27, 2019, Langweixian went to a Cantonese Restaurant and ordered everything on the menu, at least forty different kinds of Cantonese food, which mainly consisted of meat and rice noodles. The common characteristics about food can be observed in these three selected videos. The first is that Langweixian likes to have a table full of food. When the table is too small to place too much food, he chooses to pile up the food. The second is that the layout of food always takes up half of the screen. The third is that the food types are mainly meat and noodles, with almost no vegetables. The fourth is he pays more attention to the diversity of food types, ordering "everything on the menu."

Ordering more than ten servings of the same dish is also a common characteristic in A Hao's videos. In the video posted on December 6, 2019, A Hao ordered sixteen servings of curry beef with rice, sixteen fried eggs, two cups of milk tea, three cups of lemon tea, and six cans of coke. In the video posted on December 27, 2019, A Hao ordered ten servings of steamed short ribs, ten servings of steamed chicken feet with soy sauce, ten servings of steamed rice rolls with shrimp, ten servings of steamed veal ribs with pepper sauce, ten cans of cokes, and two bottle 1L of orange juice. In the video posted on December 29, 2019, A Hao ordered thirty servings of steamed rice rolls with pork, one serving of curry chicken chops, six cups of milk tea, and three cups of water. In addition to eating a lot of food, A Hao's videos also have other characteristics on food: first of all, all the dishes are presented at the same time. Secondly, in terms of layout, food always occupies half of the screen. Thirdly, generally, there is only one type of food on the table with more than ten servings. Fourthly, most of the dishes he ordered are about meat, with drinks on the side and almost no vegetables.

The Editing in Mukbang Videos

On the editing of videos, the three selected mukbangers have their own focus points. Maomeimei sometimes speeds up or slows down eating behaviors, like chewing, to meet her different needs for encoding, and to enrich the depiction of eating experience. Maomeimei sometimes adds texts on videos, often as a complement to sensory expressions and body language of the eating experience, such as, "The softness of glutinous rice with the great smelled gravy sauce...," "I can't wait to eat it," "What a juicy chicken," "I like the sound of drinking water," "Sweet and sour pork ribs, amazing!" Background music is also essential in Maomeimei's video, and she likes to use the same pleasant light music.

The length of Langweixian's videos is always under one minute. Therefore, his eating performance part in his videos is always accelerated, so that the viewer can see the whole process of his eating. Also, in his videos, he barely talks when he is eating, the only sounds are cheerful background music. Generally, he edits his videos through subtitles, sound effects, and transitions.

In A Hao's video, he always interviews other witnesses' attitudes towards his performance before and during his eating. During his eating, he likes to use passionate background music to highlight the theme of "challenge." By using the acceleration in video editing, the viewer can see the complete version of his eating performance within one minute. Also, he subtitles his videos.

Shared Themes Across Videos

Overall, all three mukbangers have common themes in encoding their eating. Specifically, the shoot sites are usually set at home or in restaurants, which are usually

places that people use to eat meals. In terms of encoding food, they all choose to eat a large quantity of food, which is mainly about meat and almost no vegetables. Also, they prefer to drink soda rather than water. In terms of food arrangement, all dishes are present on the screen at the same time and take up half of the screen. In video editing, they often use acceleration or deceleration to show their eating performances. In addition, they pay much attention on constructing the unique personality of themselves.

Viewers' Responses to Mukbang

Mukbangers use various strategies to construct the image of themselves eating. However, whether the viewer take the initiative to use the "preferred code" provided by the creators of these mukbang videos to read is the focus of this section of the observation. In other words, the viewer's decoding of the selected sample videos is the subject of this section.

Viewers' Reaction on Food Portion

Many viewers speculated on the quantity of food consumed by mukbangers when they are not in front of the camera. Tanyihao wrote about Maomeimei's video: "I took Maomeinei to a buffet, and the owner of the buffet cried somehow." Bojuekulianmachao also commented, "That's a lot! Wait, are you really finished all that? I can't believe my eyes." Xiaoxiami wrote regarding an episode posted by Langweixian got 48,000 likes, "If I eat as much as you did, I would never see you guys again." Kafeidouxiaokeai commented, "Mukbanger's stomach is always a mystery," got 18,000 likes. Sangegndenghuoduichoumian625 also wrote, "I feel like one meal that Langweixian eat is totally enough to feed both my boyfriend and I for a whole week." Keerbianyouxiu wrote about A Hao's video, "I always want to ask, how big your stomach is? Every single

meal you can eat a lot." Biaoge commented, "You stomach is huge!" which obtain 10,1000 likes. Wangzherongyaofashikong also wrote, "What I have been wondering is how mukbanger can eat such amount of food that is more than stomach can contain? How did that happen?" Weihuaguang wrote, "The weight of the food is almost catching up with your own." And Baoge commented, "Please tell me, how many hours did you spend on finishing eating these foods?" Faced with the unusual size of food displayed in videos, the viewer's response is usually expressed as shock. And this public shock may continue to ferment into suspicion, and even into complete distrust. Like some comments regarding A Hao's videos correspond to this pattern. C Y wrote, "I don't believe you can eat that much. Can you challenge eating 1,000 bowls of noodle?" *** wrote, "This video is edited, it's performance," which got 29,000 likes. Henanluoliyangting also wrote, "Do you guys believe he eats all of it? I don't believe it anyway," which got 19,000 likes. Jinjinhoney commented, "I don't believe you can do this every day. Your videos are all edited!" Chen`xiao commented, "Don't speed up videos next time. I have enough time to watch them," which had 27,000 likes. And Dongyingchujiu also wrote, "Don't speed up the video! A person's stomach cannot be that big. Eating too much is simply unrealistic!" It can be seen that some viewers not only define mukbang as shock behavior, but even deny its existence, thinking that it is a manifestation of pseudoscience.

Viewers' Reaction on Body Type

Viewers also frequently discuss the body type of mukbangers. The selected three mukbangers who have the most fans on Kuaishou are all meet normative body standards, and even could be considered as slim. Therefore, most viewers express their desires and envy on owning this kind of body that never becomes overweight even with their food

consumption. About Maomeimei's body shape, Kexibushini commented, "Even if she eats so much, her collarbone is still obvious. I am really envious;" Nannan wrote, "Why can't she become fat? Even if I only drink water, I will gain weight! Unreasonable!" Wangzherongyaoleixi wrote, "I am not jealous how many gifts you received, but I envy your slim body!" which got 14,9000 likes. Qingxiyuyinghua commented, "Maomeimei, how could you eat so many high-calorie foods but still keep slim?" Likewise, Thanksformybof wrote, "Who can tell me why she is not fat after eating too much?" Wangshiruyi also wrote, "You eat meat every day but why are you so slim?" Shengdoushi commented, "I am jealous Maomeimei who can eat whatever she wants but still slim;" Rehuochaotianfenghuang wrote, "You eat a lot, but why you are still such slim!" Vip na also wrote, "I am so jealous of you! You look so slim. I would rather spend a lot of money on eat, if I will never gain weight;" Shugaungnvshen commented, "please tell me your secret to keep slim;" and ROU wrote, "Maomeimei's physique is that kind of physique that never get fat." Similarly, some viewers also react to Langweixian's body shape. Chenhaohepingjingying wrote, "The amount of food that you eat can serve at least ten people, and you are not even getting fat," which get 1,000 likes. Zonghezhubonaixi also wrote, "Langweixian, why you eat that much but you still have a standard figure." Xiaohuange wrote about A Hao's body shape, "You ate a lot, but why didn't I see you gain weight;" YLX commented, "I am not jealous he can eat a lot, but I am jealous he can keep so slim after eating that much;" And Shangqiu wrote, "I wondered how could he keep his body shape look slim after eating a lot every day?" All these comments point out the viewer's pursuit of slim body. Meanwhile it reflects the slim body type as the basis of thinness culture's judgment of beauty which is deeply rooted among the public.

It is worth mentioning that some comments are gender-oriented. Maomeimei received eleven comments that talked about her body shape, which generally expressed the same meanings. On the one hand, they wanted to uncover the secret about how to keep slim after binge eat. On the other hand, they were envious of the body that can keep slim after binge eat. It is can be seen from the comments that female body type is more likely to attract attention and cause discussion. A slim figure is regarded as one of the ideal beauty standards in modern Chinese society, especially in the requirement of feminine beauty. The viewer's desire for slim body also reinforces the dominant of thinness culture discourse, especially prominent in women. In fact, the aesthetic standard of female body type is a constraint and restriction placed on women. In addition to the judgement of female body shape, some audiences regulate the "transgressive eating behaviors" (Gillespie, 2019) of female mukbanger display in public through disciplining language, such as telling them to manage actions and expressions, do not eat too much, do not gobble up food, etc. Like Medusa wrote about Maomeimei's video, "The action and expression of you eating is a little on purpose." Huluobo4656 commented, "I didn't feel an appetite after watching her, I just felt uncomfortable for my stomach." Feijie…… also wrote, "No matter how much she eats, Maomao [a nickname of Maomeimei] is the best looking mukbanger. It's not disgusting to see her binge. Enjoying food is Maomao's characteristic, because she doesn't gobble up food. Support Maomao forever!" However, these regulations hardly appeared in the comment area of the other two selected male mukbangers. Women are still restricted by social norms. Nonetheless, mukbang provides rational reasons and acceptable ways for women to openly eat a lot of food and show their appetite in public. At the same time, women engaged in eating indulgently breaking

the traditional rules of eating norms for women. Not only female mukbangers, but also female viewers, who also openly expressed their desire for eating and appetite, which could be considered as relatively liberation on gendered eating norms.

The Desire of Hunger

Audience members expressed how the videos made them hungry. Mr. Xiaofeng [food diary] responded to one of Maomeimei's videos, "One person is eating in front of phone, while a group of people is drooling when looking at the screen." Wangzherongyaodada wrote, "Maomeimei, you successfully made me hungry!" Xiaozhuailaile also wrote, "It looks delicious! I am hungry right now!" Mianxiangyangguang113 commented, "I am so hungry because of watching this." Lanlizhideshiyuji wrote, "I really feel that Maomeimei's mukbang really can rise my appetite." Nihaoa also write, "I want to eat everything after watching you eat." And Yulinfeng commented, "I really enjoy watching you eat, which can rise my appetite," which got 75,000 likes. Xiaoh969 wrote regarding Langweixian's video, "What is the purpose of your video? Are you going to make us super hungry?" Zhuomahanhong also wrote, "Does anyone feel hungry after watching he eat?" And Shenshousaoping commented, "Seriously, I am hungry!" Yinshuang's reaction to A Hao's video, "It made me feel hungry." Viewers manage or stimulate their feelings of hunger and appetite by watching mukbang videos so as to obtain the thrill of desire satisfaction. For viewers with anorexic tendencies, by watching mukbang, those viewers seem to establish some kind of complicated relationship with mukbang videos, which seems to help them get better. Baifumeiniang wrote about Maomeimei's video, "I really like the way you eat. Although I don't like eating food." Jingjingherouyayouyueding also wrote, "When I don't want to

eat, I always come here to watch your videos," which got 15,000 likes. And

Miyounvshen commented, "I admire you that you have a good appetite every day!"

Likewise, Hushikangyijie wrote about Langweixian's video, "I haven't eaten for two

days, but I am hungry after watching your videos," which got 22,000 likes.

The Satisfaction of Vicarious Eating

At the same time, other viewers expressed satisfaction as seeing the mukbangers

eat, replacing their own hunger. A comment thread on Maomeimei's video by

Guangzhouchenchenfushi, "Come here see her every day when I feel hungry."

Bibeiyaqian also wrote, "Everytime when I am hungry, I want to watch your video."

Tiaotiaotang wrote about Langweixian's video, "I really admire you can eat anything you

like. I have a bad stomach. I can only eat few kinds of food." Obviously, these viewers

regard mukbangers' eating behavior as their own, trying to satisfy their fantasies of eating

and gaining pleasure through "vicarious eating."

Social Connection Between Mukbangers and Viewers

The emotional connection felt by viewers to the mukbangers was also expressed.

Loyal viewers perceived themselves as friends or family members to their favorite

mukbangers. Feijie…… thread a comment on Maomeimei's video, "No matter how

much she eats, Maomao (a nickname of Maomeimei) is the best looking mukbanger. It's

not disgusting to see her binge. Enjoying food is Maomao's characteristic, because she

doesn't gobble up food. Support Maomao forever!" Yiyangqianxidepengyou also wrote

about Maomeimei, which got 23,000 likes, "I hope everyone would treat Maomao well

next year. She is a really good girl with good personality. Be happy forever!" And

Xuebing wrote, "I dream to have what you cooked!" Amy(chenke) commented on

Langweixian's video, "You are the only mukbanger I admire," which got 21,000 likes. Yajieyizhi wrote, "You are the only mukbanger that I like." Yuanyuan also wrote, "After watching a lot of mukbangers' live broadcasts or videos, only Langweixian made me feel happy. I don't know why." Maomaochicao commented, "I enjoy watching your videos! I like you so much!" Luoyinian wrote, "Langweixian is my favorite, I believe Langweixian is not doing the fake eat. Respect❤️," which got 12,000 likes. Mr · Z wrote, "I have no doubt about Langweixian, I believe his video is real." Maidou5889 also wrote, "Langweixian really loves to eat, and his video is super real." And Jiangchengxinyue commented, "What should I do? I had class tomorrow. I don't want to miss any live broadcasts of Langweixian." Chensansui wrote, "I have hundreds of bulls on my farm. Welcome to eat!" Xiaoyunchuandikuaile also wrote, "I am so good at cooking. I really want to cook meals for you." Choubaoyi wrote about A Hao's video, "A Hao, you are so cool! take care of yourself!" Gaobieyuanlaideziji wrote, "A Hao is my favorite mukbanger!" Wenrouzhigeiyizhongren also wrote, "I like watching your Live broadcasting. Please do it! Otherwise, I don't know what I should do during the mealtime." In addition to expressing their love for mukbangers, viewers even want to imitate mukbangers' behavior, trying to have the same eating experience. Zaizaiaichi wrote about Langweixian's video, "Hope to be as good as Langweixian someday!" Shandongchihuodayao also wrote, "I want to be a mukbanger like you. I am working on it!" Mr.Yang's dinner react to A Hao's video, "In order to imitate A Hao's mukbang, I spent at least 300 thousand RMB, but it looks still not enough. It costs a lot of money to be a mukbanger." Huyameijilumeishi commented, "Someone told me I'm not suitable for being a mukbanger. No matter what, I will stick to it. No pain, no gain." Aichideluxi

wrote, "I am a new muckbanger! A Hao, after imitating you to be a mukbanger. The number of my followers hasn't increased, while I gained almost 10 pounds." These viewers regard their favorite mukbanger as a learning object rather than a recreational object. Hence, mukbang brings them not only the pleasure of desire satisfaction, but also the affectional association.

It Is Harmful to Health

Some viewers believe that the activities carried out by mukbanger are harmful to one's health. Shengmingshouhuzhe wrote about Maomeimei's video, "She doesn't give her stomach a rest. Although she earned money, how about her health? Human cannot violate the laws of nature!" C to f commented, "Even if your stomach can stand that, it is bad for your teeth." Dahaiyu also wrote, "Is it good for your health to eat that much?" Sujin commented on Langweixian's video, "You definitely eat digestive tablets after eating." Oudishijie wrote, "You often eat such greasy food. You must pay attention to prevent cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases." And Xiatian17277 wrote, "By doing so, you will give all your money to the hospital in the future." Xiyan59604 wrote regarding A Hao's video, "Although I would like to watch you eat, I always worry about your stomach." Bblinlinbb also wrote, "You cannot finish all that, even though you still feel hungry. The stomach cannot contain that much food!"

Viewers also directly commented on the content of the mukbang video. Shouxindetaiyang m wrote about Maomeimei's video, "If I didn't see it wrong, is this pan-fried baozi been placed directly on the table?" Daningningrechangchibo also wrote, "The meal is so rich every day!" Ruanqi commented on Langweixian's video, "The guy behind you has washing the dishes all morning!" Tanxiaoxia wrote, "Your mom is the

real Ace!" Linglingaimeishi also wrote, "Hahahahahahahahaha your friend's expression is sluggish." And Dujiaoshou commented, "That waiter is so handsome." Xuanbao wrote about A Hao's video, "Braised pork belly is my favorite!" Junzifan wrote, "Are the two people behind you able to eat a lot either? You finished yours and went away, but they hadn't finished eating." Chihuolinchenchen also wrote, "The cost of your meal is equivalent to my monthly salary."

Mukbang and Dietary Habits

The audience comments of the audience suggest that mukbang culture may be influencing their eating habits. Chenxingchenmin wrote about Maomeimei's video, "I want to eat crayfish." Sansanaidamao wrote regarding Langweixian's video, "Your meal always looks good! I want to have the same kind of meal." And Shangkumeixie commented, "His eating makes me feel his food is super delicious. However, when I got home and cooked the same thing, it was not as delicious as what I thought." Haowenyuanchang commented on A Hao's video, "It seems like what I want to eat." Xinyuanhaixian wrote, "I missed this taste so much." Kafeidouxiaokeai also wrote, "I don't envy him that he can eat a lot. I only envy what he eats all my favorite," which got 11,000 likes. Some people even imitated the mukbangers. Aichideluxi commented on A Hao's video, "I am a new muckbanger! A Hao, after imitating you to be a mukbanger. The number of my followers hasn't increased, while I gained almost 10 pounds." And Mr. Yang's dinner also wrote, "In order to imitate A Hao's mukbang, I spent at least 300 thousand RMB, but it's still not enough. It costs a lot of money to be a mukbanger." Others were increased their appetite and had follow-up actions, Like Sansanaichirou wrote about Langweixian's video, "Make me want to eat more. Even I already had lunch,

I am cooking myself a bowl of noodle." In addition, some viewers expressed their desire to eat a lot of food after watching the mukbang video, Xiaoxueshengguomalu wrote about Langweixian's video, "I envy you so much! I want to eat as much as you! However, I get full very quick." Chihuodabing commented on A Hao's video, "A Hao really can eat a lot! What should I do to eat that much like him?" Wuergangan wrote, "I really want to have a stomach like you." As can be seen from the above, watching the mukbang video can give viewers a desire to eat. This kind of induced video affects the viewer's perception, concept, and action of healthy eating in a subtle way.

DISCUSSION

This thesis examined the content and audience responses of mukbang videos. A textual analysis was conducted on the three most-followed mukbangers: Maomeimei (ID: 爱美食的猫妹妹), Langweixian (ID: 大胃浪胃仙), and A Hao (ID: 大胃王阿浩), with nine edited videos and 135 comments toward the selected videos. In terms of the selected videos, lighting, video shooting components, editing, sound (including chewing or crunching) and overall aesthetics, as well as the dialogue, text, quantity, positioning, variety of food, the physical attributes of the mukbangers and other characteristics were analyzed and explored. In terms of comments, this thesis examined the number of likes, text, tone, and overall attitudes and emotions.

Mukbang videos share similarities in their lighting, scene setting, site, and editing. With the popularity of mukbang videos, some people see the economic benefits and popularity of mukbang, so they want to replicate this success, which may be one of the reasons that some shared themes are embedded in their videos. The three selected mukbanger are committed to creating a scene that is recognized as an eating place. Eco

argues that signs "look like objects in the real world because they reproduce the conditions (that is, the codes) of perception in the viewer" (Eco 1976, p.595). In fact, the seemingly natural codes are constructed artificially. For example, Maomeimei's video shows an atmosphere of a warm home, but it is just the setting she built in her office, and all the shooting process takes place in the office. She encodes her videos through the warm yellow lighting, Chinese style dining room scene setting, site, etc., to create the illusion that she is eating in a real dining room in the real world. Similarly, Langweixian and A Hao both deliberately select restaurants that are in line with the need of the script. Likewise, they edit the video to make the intention they want to convey clearer and more prominent.

Also, food is always presented in large quantities in the mukbang videos, usually occupying half of the screen and is mostly meat, with few vegetables. According to Magoulas (2009), foods that are blue and green reduce appetite, yellow or orange can stimulate appetite, and red can increase appetite. Therefore, the color of fully-cooked meat with spicy sauce can greatly increase viewers' appetite. This may also be the reason why there are almost no vegetables in their food. As Lupton (2018) argued, contemporary food culture has inspired viewers' desire through the widespread practice that depict the attractive qualities of food. Also, the "stimulating content" of overeating and unhealthy eating habits is used by mukbangers as a means to gain high popularity and attract traffic, which has also been confirmed in the research of Kang et al. (2020). In addition, the food shown in the video is mainly popular food items, which means that they are widely recognized and accepted by people, as well as are sought after in that time. Although

some of these foods have regional characteristics, the viewer's perception of these foods

is similar because of the same cultural background.

The viewer would decide whether to watch the video based on the personality of

mukbanger, as Anjani and colleagues (n.d.) found that viewers will consciously watch

mukbang videos according to their food preferences and mukbanger's personality.

Therefore, mukbangers always pay attention to encoding their personalities in videos. For

example, Maomeimei shows her gentle, cute, and non-aggressive personality by coding

her makeup, dressing, voice, etc. Langweixian's videos are humorous and funny. He

conveys his humorous personality to the audience through the funny story plots. Also, he

breaks gender stereotypes, which has made his videos more topical. A Hao's video

always shows his masculinity; "challenge" is his usual slogan. He generally consumes

one item in each video, but in large amounts. Compared with Maomeimei and

Langweixian, eating is not a pleasure, for him, but a conquest.

Based on Hall's (1980) three hypothetical positions - "dominant-hegemonic

position, negotiated position and oppositional position," from which socially constructed

decodings of a certain discourse may be discovered (Hall, 1980), viewers watching

mukbang are roughly divided into three categories: supporters, neutrals, and opponents.

However, as Savoie (2009) argued, three positions limited the discussion of the

interpretation of viewers' "multiplicity of personifications" and "multifaceted media

experiences" (p. 183). Therefore, this thesis mainly focuses on exploring possible

subcategories under three positions. Supporters are driven by motivations to watch

mukbang videos. Some supporters are trying to pursue a satisfaction of hunger pleasure

through visual and auditory stimuli, which is similar to "food porn" (Donnar, 2017;

Pereira et al., 2019; Choi, 2015); others consider mukbang as "vicarious diets," which means they regard mukbanger's eating behavior as their own, and thus get a sense of satisfaction so as to dispel loneliness (Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015; Choe, 2019; Gillespie, 2019; Bruno & Chung, 2017); and some have established an emotional association with mukbangers. By watching mukbang live broadcasts or mukbang videos regularly, the viewer gains a sense of companionship and intimacy (Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015; Hong & Park, 2018; Choe, 2019; Donnar, 2017; Spence et al., 2019; Hakimey & Yazdanifard, 2015). Others present a relatively neutral approach, mainly commenting on food portion and body shape. Some viewers are shocked by the quantity of food; while some express their pursuit of slim body. In addition, some comments directly connect with video contents. It is noted that mukbang provides women with an opportunity to publicly display their appetite, even eating indulgently. This breaks the traditional rule that women are required to be "in private, shamefully and furtively" (Bordo, 2003). There are two types of opponents. They believe mukbang are harmful to health or think mukbanger's performances are not authentic. It can be observed in the viewer's comments that the viewer is not only an interpreter, but also an author. They are trying to guide the content of the video. Like Mingwangxing commented on Langweixian's video, "Eat all of the food that Xue Zhiqian's hot pot restaurant has." Henxiaosa wrote about A Hao's video, "I want to see you eat twenty bags of compressed biscuits." Yoxiaoxiannv wrote, "Can you challenge to eat 20 pounds of white rice? No side dishes." And Yuwowenrou wrote, "A Hao, can you challenge eating canned herring?" As Fiske said, viewers may play an authorial role on determining what is to be

shown on the media, the boundaries between encoder and decoder are getting blurred

(Fiske, 2000).

The encoding of diet in mukbang videos has a certain temptation on the viewer,

affecting the viewer's perception and behavior of eating habits in a subtle way. For

example, the three selected mukbangers eat a lot of food at a time. This would convey to

the audience an idea that excessive eat is allowed. Similarly, mukbanger's way of eating

also conveys an unhealthy concept to the viewer. For example, A Hao usually challenges

himself to eat a lot of food. This kind of challenging behavior could arouse the

competition psychology of the audience, meaning they want to imitate A Hao to do

challenge style eating, so as to satisfy their desire to conquer. When Maomeimei was

eating, her joyful expression and body languages left room for viewers to be curious and

imagine the taste of food, which stimulated their appetite. As Spence et al. (2019) has

pointed out that eating norms perceived by the audience will be affected by mukbang:

audience would more easily eat more than usual, and even imitate mukbangers' way of

eating. In addition, in the choice of food, mukbanger tends to choose high-calorie and

rich-sugar meals, such as, meats, desserts, sodas, etc., but with no vegetables on the side.

This would convey and enhance the idea of inadequate and imbalanced diets. Similarly,

Hong and Park (2018) claim that viewers' food choices can be affected by mukbang,

tending to consume more high-calorie and oily foods. By constantly promoting this

unhealthy diet as well as intentionally or unintentionally promoting the way mukbanger

eat, viewers may ignore the existing concept of healthy eating so as to imitate the new

dietary habits that full of novelty and pleasure. From the comments of the viewer, similar

patterns were observed. Some viewers expressed their improved appetite and hoped to eat

as much as mukbanger. Even some viewers have begun to imitate the mukbangers' eating behavior and practice to be a mukbanger. It can be seen that mukbang has indeed caused a certain adverse effect on the eating habits of some viewers.

Limitations

The choice of comments in this thesis is based on their popularity-- the number of likes. Although such comments are somewhat representative, some of the popular comments are not responses to video content and mukbangers; they were unrelate to video content, such as a joke or gossip that can get a lot of likes. Like Zhongguojiayou wrote about Maomeimei's video, "Dashao and Maomeimei broke up," which got 31,000 likes. To a certain extent, it weakened its representativeness and makes it non-analytical. Also, the sample size of only three mukbangers are relatively small. Different mukbangers have different personalities and styles, and the viewers may have various reactions towards them. For example, the selected mukbangers all have slim body shapes, but other mukabangers who do not have a slim body may receive different opinions toward their body shapes.

The focus of this thesis on the editing videos of mukbang rather than live broadcast. The live broadcast can be also reflective of the viewer's response to mukbang. Because it was interactive in real time, and the audience could immediately respond to mukbanger's behavior without typing any unrelated comments. Therefore, live broadcast is another focus to study mukbang videos.

This thesis linked mukbang with the topic of health and diet habits, discussing the influence of mukbang on the eating habits of the viewer, which supplemented related fields to a certain extent. For future research, more representative sample should be

selected for the examination. The collection of real-time chat in live broadcasts can be considered as a way to study the impact of mukbang on viewers.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the construction of the mukbang videos and viewers' responses toward it and examined the impact of mukbangers on the health and diet habits of their viewers. The creator of mukbang videos encodes the video to construct an atmosphere that can stimulate appetite and create a social connection through viewer interaction. Three main positions of response to mukbang are found: supporters, neutrals, and opponents. The supporter establishes an emotional connection with mukbangers and gains satisfaction through visual and auditory stimuli. The neutrals do not express their attitude towards mukbang, and only decode it based on the elements presented in the video. Opponents, mainly from the health point of view, believe that mukbang is not conducive to health, and does not conform to the laws of nature, as well as question the authenticity of mukbang. This thesis also argues that mukbang videos can affect or change some viewers' eating habits and healthy eating concepts to a certain extent.

Based on the research in this thesis, one of the main reasons why mukbang is popular is because it satisfies the desires and emotional needs of the viewers. On the one hand, mukbang serves as a virtual companionship or vicarious diets to meet the affective and physiological needs of the viewer. On the other hand, the unique personas of mukbangers can attract the viewers to build a virtual relationship with them.

Social media, such as Kuaishou, provides technical support for this emotional connection. Furthermore, the openness of the Internet and the convenience and low cost of video production on social media have driven the development of mukbang. Eating

meals, as a common daily behavior, is connected with social media, making a relatively private behavior shift to a public display and virtual social activities. This makes the boundary between private and public increasingly blurred. On Kuaishou, the anonymity and openness between the creator and the viewer provide a unique and novel outlet of emotions. Also, mukbang videos are not a one-way flow, but bidirectional interactive.

Mukbang represents a subculture that is distinct from mainstream dietary norms. It reflects that people cannot solve the contradiction between food intake and weight loss and cannot overcome the imbalance of the conflict between urban development and group loneliness. It is precisely these two that contributed to the emergence of the mukbang. Moreover, people's aesthetic system and cultural value system are also being deconstructed by the pursuit of desires and consumer culture. In order to alleviate these problems, the relevant video platforms should play the gatekeeper role of network management and maintain the positive atmosphere of the online community. Individuals should also be alert to the negative effects of excessive entertainment.

With the development of mukbang, many mukbangers gradually tend to attract viewers through exaggerated overeating and other dramatic actions to obtain sufficient traffic, but there are no warnings against this exaggerated eating habit in mukbang videos. As some scholars point out that distribution of food-related content through the media will encourage overeating (Bodenlos & Wormuth,2013; Boyland et al., 2011; Halford JC, 2008). Therefore, the actions of mukbangers in their video may affect the audience's perception and behavior in a subtle way, making them believe that excessive diet is normal, and then begin to imitate the dietary habits of mukbangers. Donnar (2017) believes that the imbalance of food and hunger may further exacerbated some social

problems, like eating disorders, obesity, and other health issues. Hence, in order to reduce

the adverse impact on viewers, especially teenagers or children who have not formed a

correct understanding of a healthy diet, relevant platforms should formulate

corresponding policies to deal with the harmful impact of such exaggerated eating

behaviors, such as an overeating warning marked below the video.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF SELECTED MUKBANGERS AND VIDEOS

Table 1. *This table is about the selected top three videos of each mukbanger posted on*

December 2019. The collected data was by January 31, 2020.

Selected Videos				
Mukbanger	Date	Views	Comments of videos	Likes of videos
Maomeimei	12/06/19	9.8m	4858	144521
Maomeimei	12/15/19	9.9m	7909	162740
Maomeimei	12/30/19	10.9m	11177	219430
Langweixian	12/08/19	11.2m	11898	284356
Langweixian	12/21/19	14.9m	5539	516976
Langweixian	12/27/19	10.0m	3964	221444
A Hao	12/06/19	19.7m	19064	464074
A Hao	12/27/19	18.3m	22817	558208
A Hao	12/29/19	13.9m	11246	470694

APPENDIX B: SAMPLES OF SELECTED COMMENTS

Selected comments on Maomeimei's videos:

Top 15 comments on 12/09/19 (9.8m views)

- Jingboran.Huahua.: Does anyone think that Maomeimei's hair style without bangs looks better? (4.2k likes)

- zhizhuo59512: I feel that her boyfriend doesn't love her at all! (2.5k likes)

- Mr. xiaofeng [food diary]: One person is eating in front of phone, while a group of people is drooling when looking at the screen (969 likes)

- kexibushini: Even if she eats so much, her collarbone is still obvious. I am really envious (860 likes)

- chanmaoniangliaha'erbin: She eats less and less day after day (694 likes)

- shengming shouhuzhe: She doesn't give her stomach a rest. Although she earned money, how about her health? Human cannot violate the laws of nature! (555 likes)

- chenxingchenmin: I want to eat crayfish～(308 likes)

- _xuebing: I dream to eat what you cooked! (270 likes)

- Huitiange: I just don't understand why so many people like watching her eat… (155 likes)

- Nannan: Why can't she be fat? Even if I only drink water, I will gain weight! Unreasonable! (104 likes)

- Shouxindetaiyang m: If I didn't see it wrong, is this pan-fried baozi been placed directly on the table? (74 likes)

- Feijie……: No matter how much she eats, Maomao is the best looking mukbanger. It's not disgusting to see her eating. Enjoying food is Maomao's feature, because she doesn't gobble up food. Support Maomao forever! (74 likes)

- Lanlizhideshiyuji: I really feel that Maomao's mukbang really can rise my appetite (62 likes)

- Range~66: how could these people become popular? (54 likes)

- Dahaiyu: Is it good for your health to eat that much? (35 likes)

Top 15 comments on 12/15/19 (9.9m views)

- Wangzherongyaoleixi: I am not jealous how many gifts you received, but I envy your slim body! (14.9k likes)

- Ms. Nuannuanda: What a pretty makeup Maomeimei wears today! (1.8k likes)

- Qingxiyuyinghua: Maomeimei, how could you eat so many high-calorie foods but still keep slim? (1.1k likes)

- Thanksformybof: Who can tell me why she is not fat after eating too much? (996 likes)

- Medusa: The action and expression of you eating is a little on purpose (752 likes)

- Daningningrechangchibo: The meal is so rich every day! (732 likes)

- ROU: Maomeimei's physique is that kind of physique that never get fat. (481 likes)

- Nihaoa: I want to eat everything after watching you eat. (430 likes)

- Wangshiruyi: You eat meat every day but why are you so slim? (270 likes)

- Wangzherongyaodada: Maomeimei, you successfully made me hungry! (180 likes)

- Baifumeiniang: I really like the way you eat. Although I don't like eating food. (153 likes)

- Shugaungnvshen: please tell me your secret to keep slim (153 likes)

- Fanxin: My takeaway hasn't arrived yet. Why did you start eating first? (102 likes)

- Shengdoushi: I am jealous Maomeimei who can eat whatever she wants but still slim (98 likes)

- Guangzhouchenchenfushi: Come here see her every day when I feel hungry (78 likes)

  Top 15 comments on 12/30/19 (10.9m views)

- Yulinfeng: I really enjoy watching you eat, which can rise my appetite (7.5k likes)

- Zhongguojiayou: Dashao and Maomao broke up (3.1k likes)

- Yiyangqianxidepengyou: I hope everyone would treat Maomao well next year. She is a really good girl with good personality. Be happy forever! (2.3k likes)

- Jingjingherouyayouyueding: When I don't want to eat, I always come here to watch your videos. (1.5k likes)

- Rehuochaotianfenghuang: You eat a lot, but why you are still such slim! (447 likes)

- Tanyihao: I took Maomeinei to a buffet, and the owner of the buffet cried somehow (307 likes)

- Miyounvshen: I admire you that you have a good appetite every day! (160 likes)

- Xiaozhuailaile: It looks delicious! I am hungry right now! (158 likes)

- Huluobo4656: I didn't feel an appetite after watching her, I just felt uncomfortable for my stomach (100 likes)

- Nimianduizheshishen: What a happy girl can eat a lot of tasty food every day! (93 likes)

- Mianxiangyangguang113: I am so hungry because of watching this (80 likes)

- Bojuekulianmachao: That's a lot! Wait, are you really finished all that? I can't believe my eyes (75 likes)

- Bibeiyaqian: Everytime when I am hungry, I want to watch your video (70 likes)

- C to f: Even if your stomach can stand that, it is bad for your teeth (62 likes)

- Vip na: I am so jealous of you! You look so slim. I would rather spend a lot of money on eat, only if I will never gain weight. (58 likes)

Selected comments on Langweixian's videos:

Top 15 comments on 12/08/19 (11.2m views)

- Ruanqi: The guy behind you has washing the dishes all morning! (18.7k likes)

- Wangzherongyaoleixi: I felt like I can swallow the whole world when I am hungry, but I realized I was wrong after starting to eat (6.5k likes)

- Daweilangweixian: Pay attention to the amount of your food intake (6.1k likes)

- Xiaoxiami: If I eat as much as you did, I would never see you guys again (4.8k likes)

- Hushikangyijie: I haven't eaten for two days, but I am hungry after watching your videos. (2.2k likes)

- Amy(chenke): You are the only mukbanger I admire. (2.1k likes)

- Kafeidouxiaokeai: Mukbanger's stomach is always a mystery. (1.8k likes)

- Chenhaohepingjingying: The amount of food that you eat can serve at least ten people, and you are not even getting fat. (1.0k likes)

- Chiboyiling: It must be super happy to have breakfast in this way (993 likes)

- Chensansui: I have hundreds of bulls on my farm. Welcome to eat! (748 likes)

- Zaizaiaichi: Hope to be as good as Langweixian someday! Come on! (611 likes)

- Sangegndenghuoduichoumian625: I feel like one meal that Langweixian eat is totally enough to feed both my boyfriend and I for a whole week (562 likes)

- Wangzherognyaoqingfeng: Langweixian is so picky to vegetables (498 likes)

- Jinxideqingchen: Your breakfast is a little expensive (226 likes)

- Xiaoenzi52: I feel like he's wasting food (30 likes)

  Top 15 comments on 12/21/19 (14.9m views)

- Langweixian: It seems that I still can't resist the temptation of food (23.8k likes)

- Tanxiaoxia: Your mom is the real Ace! (3.7k likes)

- Xiaoyunchuandikuaile: I am so good at cooking. I really want to cook meals for you (2.4k likes)

- Mr · Z: I have no doubt about Langweixian, I believe his video is real (1.9k likes)

- Oudishijie: You often eat such greasy food. You must pay attention to prevent cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases. (898 likes)

- Junjunxiaojiu: Langweixian is super cool! In his live broadcasting, he ate three medium bowls of noodle in 27 seconds (760 likes)

- Xiaoh969: What is the purpose of your video? Are you going to make us super hungry? (620 likes)

- Yajieyizhi: You are the only mukbanger that I admire (548 likes)

- Maidou5889: Langweixian really loves to eat, and his video is super real (341 likes)

- Zonghezhubonaixi: Langweixian, why you eat that much but you still have a standard figure (290 likes)

- Xiatian17277: By doing so, you will give all your money to the hospital in the future (208 likes)

- Tiaotiaotang: I really admire you can eat anything you like. I have a bad stomach. I can only eat few kinds of food. (171 likes)

- C Y: I don't believe you can eat that much! Can you challenge eating 1,000 bowls of noodle? (109 likes)

- Xiaoxueshengguomalu: I envy you so much! I want to eat as much as you! However, I get full very quick. (91 likes)

- Zhuomahanhong: Does anyone feel hungry after watching he eat? （88 likes）

Top 15 comments on 12/31/19 (10m views)

- Linglingaimeishi: Hahahahahahahahaha your friend's expression is sluggish (5.5k likes)

- Mingwangxing: Eat all of the food that Xue Zhiqian's hot pot restaurant has (2.7k likes)

- Xiaoqiao: I still want to ask Langweixian: are you female or male (3.3k likes)

- Luoyinian: Langweixian is my favorite, I believe Langweixian is not doing the fake eat. Respect❤️ (1.2k likes)

- Baobeidaji: Why do people always ask the gender of Langweixian? I don't care that. I just like watching he eat (972 likes)

- Sansanaidamao: Your meal always looks good! I want to have the same kind of meal (873 likes)

- Shenshousaoping: Seriously, I am Hungry (622 likes)

- Maomaochicao: I enjoy watching your videos! I like you so much! (589 likes)

- Sujin: You definitely eat digestive tablets after eating (427 likes)

- Shandongchihuodayao: I want to be a mukbanger. I am working on it! (330 likes)

- Sansanaichirou: Make me want to eat more. Even I already had lunch, I am cooking myself a bowl of noodle (290 likes)

- Dujiaoshou: That waiter is so handsome (188 likes)

- Jiangchengxinyue: What should I do? I had class tomorrow. I don't want to miss any live broadcasts of Langweixian (104 likes)

- Yanhuowuzhong: who watched Langweixian's live broadcast and knew he was not doing fake performance (87 likes)

- Yuanyuan: After watching a lot of mukbangers' broadcasts or videos, only Langweixian made me feel happy. I don't know why (63 likes)

Selected comments on A Hao's videos:

Top 15 comments on 12/19/19 (19.7m views)

- Gaimingziyizhuce: A Hao, can you record a video without acceleration? I have the time and patience to watch you finish your meal (37.9k likes)

- Henanluoliyangting: Do you guys believe he eats all of it? I don't believe it anyway (1.9k likes)

- Henxiaosa: I want to see you eat twenty bags of compressed biscuits (1.6k likes)

- Chihuolinchenchen: The cost of your meal is equivalent to my monthly salary (1.4k likes)

- Kafeidouxiaokeai: I don't envy him that he can eat a lot, I only envy what he eats all my favorite (1.1k likes)

- Choubaoyi: A Hao, you are so cool! take care of yourself (837 likes)

- jinjinHoney: I don't believe you can do this every day, your videos are all edited (810 likes)

- Rufengguojing: Fortunately, I can't eat as much as you. Otherwise I won't be able to raise myself (581 likes)

- Buliangsaonian: A Hao can really eat a lot! He drank seven 500ml bottles of orange juice continuously one time in the others' live broadcast room (439 likes)

- Datingtingya: Mukbanger rocks! (294 likes)

- Xiaohuange: You ate a lot, but why didn't I see you gain weight (202 likes)

- YLX: I am not jealous he can eat a lot, but I am jealous he can keep so slim after eating that much (180 likes)

- Yinshuang: It made me feel hungry (99 likes)

- Liunanli: Why are you able to eat a lot? Please give me the answer (84 likes)

- Xuanbao: Braised pork belly is my favorite! (67 likes)

  Top 15 comments on 12/25/19 (18.5m views)

- Yoxiaoxiannv: Can you challenge to eat 20 pounds of white rice? No side dishes (15.6k likes)

- Biaoge: You stomach is huge! (10.1k likes)

- Xiujia: Do I lack the ability to eat a lot? I lack money! (4.5k likes)

- Ly yuanzu: A Hao, you can let whole street snack shops making money (3.0k likes)

- ***: the video is edited, it's performance. (2.9k likes)

- Haowenyuanchang: It seems like what I want to eat (2.5k likes)

- Kennidefanzhuo: You stomach is super big! (1.5k likes)

- Junzifan: Are the two people behind you able to eat a lot either? You finished yours and went away, but they hadn't finished eating (1.2k likes)

- Wenrouzhigeiyizhongren: I like watching your Live broadcasting. Please do it! Otherwise, I don't know what I should do during the mealtime. (909 likes)

- ABJ…: Is Hao's toilet bigger than other's? Otherwise it won't big enough (861 likes)

- Mr.Yang's dinner: In order to imitate Hao's mukbang, I spent at least 300 thousand RMB, but it's still not enough. It costs a lot of money to be a mukbanger (547 likes)

- Shangqiu: I wondered how can he not look fat after he eats a lot every day? (293 likes)

- Weihuaguang: The weight of the food is almost catching up with your own (132 likes)

- Xinyuanhaixian: I missed this taste so much (80 likes)

- Dongyingchujiu: Don't speed up the video! A person's stomach cannot be that big. Eating too much is simply unrealistic! (78 likes)

  Top 15 comments on 12/25/19 (18.5m views)

- Yuwowenrou: A Hao, can you challenge eating canned herring? (7.9k likes)

- bblinlinbb: You cannot finish it all, even though you still feel hungry. The stomach cannot contain that much food! (3.6k likes)

- Chen`xiao: Don't speed up videos next time. I have enough time to watch them (2.7k likes)

- Nongcunwaxiaojinge: What do you think of people who want to lose weight watching your videos (1.4k likes)

- Baoge: Please tell me, how many hours did you spend on finishing eating these foods? (1.2k likes)

- Gaobieyuanlaideziji: A Hao is my favorite mukbanger! (1.0k likes)

- Keerbianyouxiu: I always want to ask. How big your stomach is? Every meal you eat a lot (901 likes)

- Wangzherongyaofashikong: What I have been wondering is how mukbanger can eat such amount of food that is more than stomach can contain? How did that happen? (852 likes)

- Huyameijilumeishi: Someone told me I'm not suitable for being a mukbanger. No matter what, I will stick to it. No pain, no gain (578 likes)

- Hecong: It looks so delicious! (370 likes)

- Chihuodabing: A Hao really can eat a lot! What should I do to eat that much like him? (233 likes)

- Shangkumeixie: His eating makes me feel his food is super delicious. However, when I got home and cooked the same thing, it was not as delicious as what I thought (190 likes)

- Aichideluxi: I am a new muckbanger! A Hao, after imitating you to be a mukbanger. The number of my followers hasn't increased, while I gained almost 10 pounds (189 likes)

- Wuergangan: I really want to have a stomach like you (108 likes)

- Xiyan59604: A Hao, although I would like to watch you eat, I always worry about your stomach (95 likes)

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