

## Filipino “Mukbang” Food Vloggers; A Qualitative Inquiry

Lloyd Matthew C. Derasin<sup>a</sup>, Marvin S. Canque<sup>b</sup>, Al Horteza<sup>c</sup>, Francis Val A. Gamboa<sup>d</sup>,  
Cathlene Grace G. Trinidad<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup> College of Teacher Education and College of Technology, Cebu Technological University,  
Naga Extension Campus, City of Naga, Philippines

### Abstract

The study explored the Lived Experiences of Filipino “Mukbang” Food Vloggers. It gives insights into lives of Filipino food vloggers, their opportunities, their difficulties, and their challenges. Moreover, it used a phenomenological design to explore and understand Filipino mukbang vlogger’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings regarding the phenomenon at hand. Likewise, five participants hailed from different parts of the Philippines, using purposive sampling in the selection process. The study revealed nine (9) significant themes including, (1) meeting new friends, (2) struggles in creating the videos, (3) striving for self-improvement, (4) happiness, (5) motivation, (6) positivity, (7) health problems. (8) Self-confidence and (9) self-realization. Furthermore, the study established that Mukbang vloggers experienced both positive and negative effects in their chosen path. Creating vlogs enhanced their talents and skills to give the viewers satisfaction and be artistic in producing videos worth watching. Despite the challenges they've encountered, they still make other people happy and even make friends with them. These effects drive them to move forward, be more productive with their careers, and consider them a huge accomplishment.

**Keywords:** Mukbang, food vloggers, Perspectives

### Introduction

Mukbang is one of the famous food vlogs on social media platforms such as YouTube. It is both a pre-recorded and live-streamed show online where the vlogger consumes a vast amount of food in front of the camera as he connects with the viewers online. The term Mukbang comes with a mix of two Korean words, "muk-ja" which means eating, and "bang-song" which means broadcast. This term originated in South Korea a decade ago, and this eating performance has rapidly influenced other Asian countries such as Japan, China, and the Philippines.

Mukbang food vlog is snowballing to its acceptance in many other countries and where hundreds of thousands access the internet daily to watch mukbang videos. Likewise, according to Choe (2019), mukbang participants coordinate their actions through speech, written text, and embodied acts. This coordination creates involvement and, by extension, established both community and social agency. Recent newspaper coverage has indicated that there has been a growing phenomenon of individuals using internet applications for engaging in a unique online activity, watching mukbang. Not at all like normal individuals eating at domestic or in eateries, a host appears the method of eating food before the camera of a portable phone. In contrast, people observe it online and send their comments through live chat (Choe, 2019). The popularity of the mukbang can be considered a cultural phenomenon (Kang et al., 2020).

In this age, observing mukbang online is an elective way to fulfill the longing for shared eating. Based on YouTube comments, individuals are watching mukbang recordings while eating their dinners. Compared to other eating shows, mukbang vloggers intentionally eat large amounts of food with several dishes vicariously in

front of their audience adding sound-related jolts making them feel satisfied. Through these visual and sound-related jolts, these vloggers gain the opportunity to be popular and earn money. Lim and Lee (2019) considered that mukbang vloggers eat large quantity and wide assortment of foods, which takes viewers the pleasure and satisfaction of vicarious foods. In addition, Hakimey and Yazdanifard (2015) argue that to diminish the stress of life is also one of the motives that individuals want to watch mukbang. Similarly, Bruno and Chung (2017) claim that viewers watch mukbang to escape the sense of fault and unpleasant truth, and evade the stress in gaining weight.

Furthermore, Matthews (2019) explained that mukbang has already become a profession. Some mukbangers even have professional teams to create and promote their work. The income for mukbangers is generally from their audience and ad sponsors; some mukbangers also gain money through selling their brand products. Kang et al. (2020) pointed out that mukbanger on YouTube hopes to gain high popularity through the performance of overeating and compelling content. The more popular the mukbanger is, the more viewership, which means more income on the part of the mukbang vlogger.

It is along with these views and opinions that the researchers wished to conduct this study. The researchers believe that this study will give insights into the lives of Filipino food vloggers, their opportunities, their difficulties, and their challenges.

### **Methods and Materials**

The researchers used a qualitative phenomenological design to explore and understand mukbang vlogger's perceptions, perspectives, and understandings regarding the phenomenon at hand. Phenomenology is the appropriate research design because it refers to a person's experience or how they interpret those experiences. The five participants of this study came from different places in the Philippines. using purposive sampling, which involves the selection of informants based on the following: (1.) Living in the Philippines (2.) It has at least ten thousand (10,000) subscribers (3.) Mukbang Vloggers. The researchers interviewed the participants who currently work as vloggers to know their opinions and experiences during live streaming. The researchers used online platforms, such as Messenger, Zoom, and Google Meet to gather the data.

### **Research Ethics**

The ethical considerations of this research study are based on the Belmont Report of 1974, which has three fundamental ethical principles in research that involved humans as subjects, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The belief of Respect for Person included two ethical viewpoints. First, individuals should be treated as independent agents, and second, persons with reduced autonomy are eligible for protection. In the study, the participants may or may not answer the questions asked, according to their preference; that is why there are no rules on how much they should answer; they are given the right to deal with the questions asked. Furthermore, there are no students or children involved. Provided informed consent to the participants covering the purpose of the study, the potential risk, and benefits of the study, contact persons in cases of emergency, the degree of how the data will be kept confidential, and a statement stating that the participant has partaken in the study voluntarily.

### **Results**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. It yielded nine (9) significant themes, which include, (1) meeting new friends, (2) struggles in creating the videos, (3) striving for self-improvement, (4) happiness, (5) motivation, (6) positivity, (7) health problems. (8) self-confidence and (9) self-realization.

#### **Theme 1. Meeting new friends**

Theme 1 of the study is meeting new friends. Meeting new friends is one of the advantages for the participants. Making vlogs allow them to meet different kinds of people worldwide and discover their cultures.

One participant stated that he was able to meet new friends from Barcelona.

## Filipino “Mukbang” Food Vloggers; A Qualitative Inquiry

*“Opportunity yung mga dating hindi ko kakilala sa barcelona naging kilala ko dahil sa vlog parang dumami yung kaibigan , nagkaroon din ako ng kaibigan nasa ibat- ibang bansa yung mga vlogger dito sa pilipinas yung mga mukbanger dito nakilala ko din sila parang lumawak yung pakikipag kaibigan at saka ano yung opportunity na magkaroon ng extra income habang pandemic.” (participant 2)*

Furthermore, one participant said he gain a lot of friends in different places and exploring a new epitome of friendship.

*“So yong opportunity pa lamang ngayon is I gain many friends may nakilala ako from the different places, financially wala pang opportunity kasi I'm not earnings much money, friends lang siguro at sala yong I earn confidence na nasolve ko.” (participant 3)*

Meeting new friends through social media is very common nowadays. Participants usually meet new friends because of their work collaboration, and some other vloggers sponsored the participant’s vlog they became friends. Furthermore, making vlogs gives them a chance to know the attitudes of people they are dealing with.

### **Theme 2. Struggles in creating the videos**

The second theme of the study is the participants’ struggles in terms of creating the video. It came to be very difficult for the participants to develop their vlogs, as they are responsible for everything from creating a concept, cooking, eating, and editing their video to acquire the attention of their viewers.

One participant stated that he was having a difficult time in his first time creating his vlogs.

*“E describe ko yong first time ko para akong tanga dahil wala akong idea sa lahat pag video pag set up nang vide pag edit kaya ayon grabe yong struggle ko sobrang hirap nang pinag daan bago ko natutunan pano humarap sa camera.” (participant 5)*

It came to be challenging for the other participant to create concepts to gain the viewers’ attention.

*“Before I think eating in front of camera is not just easy that's why I try to do mukbang, but the reality very challenging kasi kailangan mong kunin yong attention ng viewers mo para makakaakit ka ng mga viewers, makakuha ka ng viewers so any hirap para marami palang challenges yon yong experiences ko very challenging mahirap din pala maging mukbang vlogger.” (participant 3)*

Creating a video can be a laborious process, but the payoff is worth it. If one can work out how to produce or create videos for his business in an effective, sustainable way, he will reap the benefits for a long time. Creating video is fun and easy if one is good at doing it. However, based on our interviews, making the video is hard for the participants since they have to do everything independently.

### **Theme 3. Striving for Self-Improvement**

The third theme of the study is Striving for self-improvement. This theme tells about the participant’s improvement in term of their knowledge, skills, status, and character through their efforts.

One of the participants stated that it is difficult to reach one thousand subscribers, but he was able to manage. Even if it is not that high and not consistent, he can see now that he is improving.

*“As of today, I see myself growing, so kung nakikita niyo ang channel ko ngayon 15 thousand subscriber na siya . Nong nagsisimula ako hirap na hirap ako na maka 1 thousand subscriber which is yung yun required ni YouTube so yun nakita ko gumaganda naman yung carrer ko as a vlogger although hindi siya ganun ka taas yung views ngayon hindi siya consistent minsan mataas , mababa ang views . So okay naman.” (participant 2)*

Meanwhile, another participant verbalized that he is improving in terms of editing the video and how he faces the camera.

*“Sa karon at least naay ne improve sa akoang pag vlog dili parehas sauna nga grabe kaau akoang struggle sa pag blog so karun naa nay improvement in terms of editing and the way ko mo atubang sa camera.” (participant 5)*

#### **Theme 4. Happiness**

The fourth theme of the study is happiness. The feeling of joy and fulfillment characterizes the emotional state of the participants. Participants are happy doing their vlogs, knowing they are capable of making other people happy.

One participant assumed that he is happy because he can eat foods he likes, especially food he can't afford to eat before.

*“Masaya satisfied ako kasi yong mga kini crave ko na pagkain nakakain ko so yong mga dating ordinaryong pagkain lang ang kinakain ko tulad ng sinabi ko nakakain kuna yong mga iba't ibang klase ng pagkain at dati hindi ako marunong magluto ngayon natuto na akung magluto para sa videos ko. I feel challenging syempre gusto koh kasi mag grab sa mga viewers.” (participant 3)*

Additionally, another participant said that his happiness is reflected in the enjoyment of his viewers, with the positive feedback he gets from them.

*“Masaya ako dahil marami akong napapasaya na tao especially yong mga pwd kasi sila kasi na madalas nag pe-feedback sakin part sa video ko ayon masaya ako dahil masaya rin sila.” (participant 5)*

#### **Theme 5. motivation**

The fifth theme of the study is strengths in the career. Participants could tell that they can able to overcome challenges, knowing their capabilities despite the obstacles they faced and will have in the future of their careers.

The determination and passion in making the vlog is the strengths of Participant 3.

*“Siguro yong determination ko at yong passion ko na gumawa ng video yon siguro na mayron akong strength hindi pa siguro ngayon kasi na process pa ako na ediskobre yong sarili ko kung ano ba yong pwede ko pang gawin so with the passion and determination ko yon siguro maabot o makita ko ang strength in the future talaga.” (participant 3)*

Furthermore, the participant stated that his knowledge is his strength. With the knowledge of different kinds of dishes, he considers it an additional impact on his viewers.

*“Strength siguro yong knowledge ko sa pag luluto kasi nga meron akong isang food delivery at catering magtatagal pasiya dahil marami pa akong maipapakita na pagkain sa aking pag mumukbang.” (participant 5)*

Using strengths in building a career will become an endeavor to reach goals. The Participants use their strengths to become successful on the path they're taking.

#### **Theme 6. Positivity**

The sixth theme of the study is positivity. Positivity is essential in everyday living. If a person is positive, he can't be easily discouraged or down even if the world drags him down. As an optimist, one shouldn't be shaken by this kind of people. Just stick to the goal and always bring positivity in life.

The participant stated that he ignores all the bashed he gets from the viewers and does it better, instead of being discouraged.

*pag binabash nila ako hindi ko nalang sila pinapansin. Ano minsan ginagamit ko pa sila as my motivation para mas mapaganda ko yung vlog ko at para sa susunod hindi na nila ako mababash. ” (participant 2)*

In addition, participant 4 stated that she witnessed someone hating and violently throwing negative comments with the vlog, yet she handles bashers more positive way.

*“Yes, hanggang ngayun marami paring basher, siguro na hahandle mo siya kasi viewers din siya, yung nag bubush na yun atleast nanonood rin sayo ganun, kaya think positive lang always.” (participant 4)*

## Filipino “Mukbang” Food Vloggers; A Qualitative Inquiry

Being positive doesn't mean life is perfect. It is seeing the good in everything and focus more on the good that exists. Participants see the bright side of life with a positive attitude, become optimistic, and expect the best to happen. Participants use it as their motivation to grow and excel more.

### **Theme 7. Health problem**

The seventh theme of the study is health problems which makes the participants more conscious of their health. Knowing the consequences of the career they chose, participants should manage to keep their health stable.

Participant 2 stated that he's gaining weight yet takes frequent check-ups to monitor his health.

*“Probem gaining weight yung diet mo kasi diba hindi naman yung amount ng food nag kinakain namin yung pang araw-araw lang kailangan sympre pag mukbang ka madami kang pagkain- madami kang kakainin. Yun yong maging problema ko sympre yung health din pag dimo inalagaan yong health mo every month merong akong nagpapa checkup ako nagpapa dialysis ako , tinitignan ko kung okay pa ba yung health ko. ”* (participant 2)

In addition, Participant 3 also gains weight and takes exercise now and then to maintain his body mass.

*“Akong mga challenges kay physically nag gain ko ug weight totoo talaga kay ginagawa ko nag exercise ako pag katapos nang mukbang”* (participant 5)

Participants are prone to this problem as they eat a lot amount of food that is unhealthy. In the Filipino culture, overeating food can make us very full and satisfied; however, participants should bear in mind that there are also disadvantages in it. Some disadvantages are gaining too much weight, suffer from high blood pressure, diabetes, and many more that could create health complications.

### **Theme 8. Self-confidence**

The eighth theme of the study is self-confidence. Participants said that at first, they are timid in facing the camera. As time goes by, they become confident and got used to it. They realized that having confidence will always make them good.

Participant 1 admitted that he was shy in front of the camera during his first time. Still, he was able to conquer his shyness and felt even more confident in facing the camera and speaking other dialects.

*“Sauna mauwaw gyud ko muatubang ug camera. karon confident na kaayo bisag unsa pa na nga style sa paagi sa pag vlog nako, may na kaayo mu storya ug tagalog bisag bisaya ko ba, na practice na akong tagalog o english, dependi pud sa viewers.”* (participant 1)

Participant 5 also felt shy at first but he got used to facing the camera and finds it easier now.

*“Malaking pinagbago self-confidence ko na enhance ko nabawasan kona ang shy ko kasi shy type kasi ako na tao e hindi na ako mahiya mag salita di tulad nang dati at nag improve nang konti the way ako mag salita at yong pagiging shy type ko ay nawala.”* (participant 5)

### **Theme 9. Self-realization**

The ninth theme of the study is self-realization in doing mukbang vlog, a huge portion of accomplishment is not from the profit gained but also from the confidence it builds from making those videos that you have achieve something in life.

*“Siguro self-achievement mo narin ang pag mumukbang parang it's part na may na achieve ka na something for yourself, hindi lang sa kikitain mo kundi para rin sa achievement mo para may nagawa ka for your-self.”* (participant 4)

If one is happy and contented with what he is doing, it will become the most significant achievement in life. When participants see that many of their viewers enjoy their vlogs, it also becomes their achievement and will

encourage them to do their best. Money does matter, but what matters most is genuine happiness upon doing vlogs.

### **Discussion**

The study's first finding is making friends; the participants agreed that making mukbang food vlogs allows them to meet new friends. Patulny and Seaman (2016) revealed the increasing part of online communication and social media for interactions. According to Vallor (2012), online social media supports and strengthens people's friendships of people in ways that reflect these four measurements: reciprocity, empathy, self-knowledge, and the shared life, primarily when utilized to supplement instead of a substitute for face-to-face intelligence.

Another finding of the study is the struggles in creating the video. The very nature of making videos means problems are inevitable from the equipment needed in the video's production. Nwangwun (2013) noted that video editing and production skills are rigorous processes, and a lot of time is required to carry out video editing and production tasks. In the same manner, Hua, Lu, and Zhang (2003) noted that there are already existing video editing systems, such as Adode Premiere, are great assistance for editing video, but the task is still tiresome and time-consuming, demanding significant editing skills and an aesthetic sense

Likewise, another finding of the study is striving for self-improvement, the same as learning improving oneself should never stop. To become a better version of oneself, one should focus on continuous development at every stage in life. Striving for self-improvement helps the mukbang vloggers stay focus and motivated. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) agreed that it is common for people to feel that they have grown over difficult circumstances in life. Considering earlier versions of ourselves, we often think that we have developed, improved, or have become better through experiences in life.

Similarly, the study also revealed happiness which is the feeling that arises from every moment, from every little thing, and every person you are surrounded by. In life, it could be a complex thing that is the result of thoughts and activities made in a conscious and unconscious mental state which culminates in some form of feeling or experience. Economists study happiness, and one of the field's main concerns is the link between happiness, income, and economic growth. Easterlin (1974) expounded that while those with greater earnings are happier than those with lower incomes, a rise in one's income does not always increase happiness. Easterlin et al. (2010) asserted growth might not matter for joy, even for developing countries.

In the same vein, another finding revealed the motivation and strength to pursue a career as vlogger. According to Van Vuuren (1988), this will help set into motion, excite, and motivate a person. It is vital to allude to each person's capacity to form choices and oversee their possession in life. This capacity plays a crucial part in mental health and well-being. It permits people to feel that they have control over their choices and lives. Motivated behaviors are those locked in for their inside rewards, such as fulfillment and delight. A person who is driven inside is motivated to act within the nonappearance of any outside rewards.

Furthermore, another finding is positivity. The enthusiastic connection and sympathy felt towards mukbangers are the vital contributors to creating videos. Hakimey and Yazdanifard (2015), positive comments about the mukbanger and nourishment progressed higher community and positive emotions among those who watched mukbang. Mukbang given a sense of social unity for those physically eating alone. Watching mukbang made viewers feel sincerely connected on the off chance that they were dining with someone. In addition, (Choe 2019) described that mukbang video creators could encourage subjective closeness and a sense of community and help overcome depression and alienation for those living alone and looking for companionship and a supper accomplice. Outstandingly, watching mukbang isn't essentially experienced as either helpful or dangerous, but instep as, at the same time, valuable and hurtful. With an elevating viewpoint, the vloggers see the bright side of life, become cheerful, and anticipate that the most excellent ought to happen.

Moreover, another finding of the study is about the health problems of the mukbang creators. The participant that creating mukbang video is sometimes detrimental to their health. Consuming tremendous amount of food regularly bring health risk them. According to the World Health Organization (2010), eating unhealthy foodstuffs proliferates the risk of overweight, obesity, and non-communicable diseases. Likewise, Unhealthy food vlogs consume high in caloric content, oil, and sugar or salt. Such harmful food creates issues in the health

of the person. Worse in them are the food challenges. Such food challenges are supported mainly by teenagers who influence in their health (Rajput and Sharma, 2021). In like manner. Some spectators pointed out that watching mukbang videos may cause problems related to health.

In addition, the study also revealed self-realization. A sense of self-realization is an attribute that provides an individual with a sense of pride. Ryff (1989) distinguished six psychological dimensions of self-realization. Each dimension expressed diverse challenges that people encounter as they strive to function positively. These are self-acceptance of the purpose in life, personal growth, having positive relations with others, environmental and autonomy.

In the same manner, another finding is on the self-confidence of the vloggers in creating their food vlog videos. Bénabou and Tirole (2002) expressed that self-confidence is broadly viewed as a valuable individual asset. Likewise, according to Klein, Noe, and Wang (2006), self-confidence provides motivation, which is a key determinant of persisting through complex activities. Also, Lundberg (2008) expressed that for some people, acquiring new skills is hard work requiring many hours dedicated to the process. Self-confidence prolongs the motivation needed to participate in the learning process.

### Conclusion

Mukbang vloggers experienced both positive and negative effects with the path they chose. Creating vlogs enhanced their talents and skills to give the viewers satisfaction and be artistic in producing videos worth watching. Despite the challenges they've encountered, they still make other people happy and even make friends with them. These effects drive them to move forward, be more productive with their careers, and consider them a huge accomplishment.

### Reference

- [1] Bénabou, R., & Tirole, J. (2002). Self-confidence and personal motivation. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 117(3), 871-915.
- [2] Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of posttraumatic growth: Research and practice*. Routledge.
- [3] Choe, H. (2019). Eating together multimodally: Collaborative eating in mukbang, a Korean livestream of eating. *Language in Society*, 48(2), 171-208.
- [4] Easterlin, R. A. (1974). Does economic growth improve the human lot? Some empirical evidence. In *Nations and households in economic growth* (pp. 89-125). Academic Press.
- [5] Easterlin, R. A. (2010). Happiness, growth and the life cycle. *Europe Journal of Psychology*, 7(2), 395-398.
- [6] Hua, X. S., Lu, L., & Zhang, H. J. (2003). AVE: automated home video editing. In *Proceedings of the eleventh ACM international conference on Multimedia* (pp. 490-497).
- [7] Kang, E., Lee, J., Kim, K. H., & Yun, Y. H. (2020). The popularity of eating broadcast: Content analysis of “mukbang” YouTube videos, media coverage, and the health impact of “mukbang” on public. *Health informatics journal*, 26(3), 2237-2248.
- [8] Klein, H. J., Noe, R. A., & Wang, C. (2006). Motivation to learn and course outcomes: The impact of delivery mode, learning goal orientation, and perceived barriers and enablers. *Personnel psychology*, 59(3), 665-702.
- [9] Lundberg, K. M. (2008). Promoting self-confidence in clinical nursing students. *Nurse educator*, 33(2), 86-89.
- [10] Hakimey, H., & Yazdanifard, R. (2015). The review of Mukbang (broadcast eating) phenomena and its relations with South Korean culture and society. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 2(5), 443-455.
- [11] Lim, L., & Lee, H. K. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge Handbook of Cultural and Creative Industries in Asia*. Routledge
- [12] Matthews, M. (2019, April). Why Mukbang Is Huuuuuuuge. *Men's Health*, 34, 3.

- [13] Nwangwu, E. C. (2013). Video Editing and Production Skills Possessed by Computer Education Lecturers for Effective Instructional Delivery in Colleges of Education in South-East Zone of Nigeria. In Conference Paper. DOI (Vol. 10).
- [14] Patulny, R., & Seaman, C. (2017). 'I'll just text you': Is face-to-face social contact declining in a mediated world?. *Journal of Sociology*, 53(2), 285-302.
- [15] Pereira, B., Sung, B., & Lee, S. (2019). I like watching other people eat: A cross-cultural analysis of the antecedents of attitudes towards Mukbang. *Australasian marketing journal*, 27(2), 78-90.
- [16] Rajput, S., & Sharma, P (2021) Virtual Gazing, Unhealthy Vlogs and Food Choices: A Behavioral Analysis. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*. Volume 10, Issue 4(2)
- [17] Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 57(6), 1069.
- [18] Vallor, S. (2012). Flourishing on facebook: virtue friendship & new social media. *Ethics and Information technology*, 14(3), 185-199.