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Development of a Scale for Determining Attitudes Toward Mukbang Content

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop a measurement instrument to assess individuals' attitudes toward Mukbang content (MC) and to contribute it to literature. For this purpose, a sample of 400 individuals aged 18 and above residing in Darıca, Kocaeli (Türkiye) was included in the study. Participants were reached through face-to-face data collection using a convenience sampling method. The scale development process was employed within the scope of the study. In data analysis, IBM SPSS was used for exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and SmartPLS was utilized for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As a result of the EFA, a structure consisting of 4 factors and 24 items was identified. These factors were labeled as "Addiction," "Critical View," "Instrumental Approach," and "Negative Reflection," based on the content of the items. CFA was subsequently conducted to validate this structure, and the four-factor, 24-item model was confirmed. The findings indicate that the developed measurement instrument is a valid and reliable tool for assessing individuals' attitudes toward MC. It is expected that this scale will guide and contribute to future research in this field.

Keywords: Mukbang, Content Attitude, Scale Development, Social Media, Türkiye Case.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mukbang, a Korean word combining “food” and “broadcast,” refers to live performances where broadcasters consume large portions of food live on air, interacting with viewers in real-time. The concept of mukbang first emerged in 2010 on a digital broadcasting platform in South Korea and subsequently became transnational. In many countries around the world, especially in South Korea, the number of mukbang videos and the people who produce these videos (mukbang influencers) is increasing day by day on various social media platforms. In these videos, excessive consumption is often used by the content creator to attract viewers. This situation is also increasing the number of people consuming MC. Furthermore, it is observed that the bodies of female mukbang influencers are often objectified. It is possible to see that studies on mukbang are newly being added to the scientific literature. These studies are mostly focused on video analysis and determining the psychological states of individuals. A psychometric measurement tool that measures individuals’ attitudes towards the concept of mukbang has not been found in the literature. This is precisely the starting point of this study. It is considered important to contribute to the literature a study that comprehensively addresses attitudes towards MC. The aim of this study is to develop a psychometric measurement tool to determine individuals’ attitudes towards MC.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

The term Mukbang is a digital content format originating from South Korea, formed from the combination of the Korean words meokda (먹다), meaning “to eat,” and bangsong (방송), meaning “to broadcast.” This term, referring to live performances where broadcasters (usually solitary individuals) interact with viewers simultaneously by consuming large portions of food, first emerged in 2010 on the South Korean digital live streaming platform Afreeca TV (Choe, 2019). While mukbang-format content may seem like an ordinary eating activity at first glance, it offers a rich field of analysis in terms of its media dynamics, cultural indicators, and social impacts. The underlying practice of mukbang serves as a “digital companionship” aimed at alleviating the viewer’s feeling of loneliness. Mukbang videos allow viewers to recreate the experience of eating with another person in a virtual environment, even when they are eating alone. In this respect, mukbang transforms the individual act of eating into a social ritual and constructs a new form of sociality through food and media.

Mukbang, while examined within the context of the food discourse of the digital age, is also considered a part of the new media representations built on body, identity, and culture in post-industrial societies. According to this view, food is not only a biological need; it also transforms into a media product where cultural capital circulates, social norms are reproduced, and individual performances are displayed (Bölükbaşı et al., 2025). This transformation can be explained by the theory of simulacra, introduced to the field by Baudrillard (1981). According to this theory, in contemporary society, reality is replaced by representations, and simulations take precedence over reality. Mukbang, precisely at this point, is detached from the biological function of food and transformed into a visual object of pleasure, and even a digital simulacrum. The rapid rise in popularity of mukbang on transnational platforms is directly related to the concept of glocalization, which is central to discussions about the global circulation of cultural content. The process of reinterpreting local content on global digital platforms and adapting it to different cultural codes is evaluated within the framework of Appadurai’s (1996) media flow theory. In this context, mukbang has transformed from a cultural practice unique to South Korea into a hybrid media form that produces its own local meaning in different cultural contexts. For example, in mukbang videos by Turkish YouTubers or Arab content creators, traditional foods are consumed while simultaneously producing forms that conform to their own social norms. Furthermore, mukbang can also be considered an extension of South Korea’s

cultural export strategy. Given that the Korean Wave (Hallyu) has promoted Korean cuisine globally alongside pop music, television dramas, and cosmetics, mukbang videos have become not only a form of individual consumption but also a tool for digital “gastro-diplomacy.”

Mukbang stands out as a significant phenomenon with the potential to forge social connections through digital media and social platforms. In the digital environment, content creators not only engage in a content-sharing process with their audience but also establish emotional connections. The online viewing experience offers not only passive content consumption as in traditional media but also a participatory and interactive process (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In this context, MC creators make their audience feel closer by interacting directly with them. Through comments, likes, and even live streams, viewers become a part of the content creators’ lives (Katz & Foulkes, 1962).

Viewers may tend to identify with MC creators as they observe their behavior and body language. Viewers can mirror scenes of creators eating, perceiving their experiences as a form of digital companionship. This aspect of mukbang highlights the unifying power of social media; the interaction between creators and viewers becomes not just about sharing images, but also about building a digital community (Baym, 2015). This dynamic allows creators to reach a wider audience, while viewers feel a sense of belonging.

There are various criticisms of MC. These criticisms are addressed within the context of “Encouraging Overconsumption and Unhealthy Eating Behaviors,” “Platform Capitalism: The YouTube Algorithm, the Viewer Economy, and Clickbait Culture,” and “The Content Creator’s Body and Performance Pressure in Front of the Camera.” This issue is examined in detail below.

Mukbang, while transforming food into a visual spectacle on digital platforms, can encourage viewers to adopt unhealthy eating habits. Excessive food consumption can trigger modeling behavior, especially among young viewers. It is argued that this type of content leads consumers to excessive eating behaviors (Choe, 2019). Mukbang videos by content creators such as “Banzz” and “Nikocado Avocado” frequently depict excessive eating. Viewers of this content may normalize the act of overeating. They may find MC fun and relaxing, and begin to see the eating process as an enjoyable activity. This can lead to a vicious cycle that fuels unhealthy eating habits. This situation can weaken healthy eating norms and create body-focused thinking and visual obsession in viewers. Most MC features unhealthy foods such as fast food, sugary drinks, and junk food. This could convey the message to viewers that overconsumption is normal and that eating should be perceived as an enjoyable activity (Sharps & Robinson, 2016).

The influence of such digital content can lead consumers to develop less healthy eating habits. Within the framework of Baudrillard’s (1981) theory of simulacra and simulation, mukbang is an eating practice detached from reality and reduced to a purely visual representation. These representations present viewers with an idealized and exaggerated “reality,” which can normalize unhealthy behaviors (Baudrillard, 1981). This can be addressed within the context of “Encouraging Overconsumption and Unhealthy Eating Behaviors” as a criticism of mukbang.

MC is closely tied to the workings of YouTube algorithms and digital media platforms that guide viewer behavior. Platforms encourage clickbait headlines and visuals to generate more clicks. This aligns with surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), forcing content creators to constantly produce “more and more extreme” content. According to the surveillance capitalism theory introduced by Zuboff (2019), digital platforms collect data by monitoring user behavior and convert this data into economic value. MC also becomes part of these digital surveillance systems. The algorithms of social media platforms, primarily YouTube, prioritize content designed to attract the viewer’s attention. According to these algorithms, creators are compelled to constantly produce more attention-grabbing and striking content to increase clicks and views (van Dijck, 2013).

Content creators like “Nikocado Avocado” frequently use titles like “I ate the biggest burger ever” or “The moment I ate 4 kilos” in their videos. These titles pique viewers’ curiosity and increase click-through rates.

The YouTube algorithm recommends content that encourages these videos to get more views. Thus, content creators continue to produce content that promotes consumption in line with the algorithm's demands (Fuchs, 2017). These two situations are related to the "Platform Capitalism: YouTube Algorithm, Viewing Economy, and Clickbait Culture" critique of Mukbang, specifically the "Platform Capitalism: YouTube Algorithm, Viewing Economy" aspect. Clickbait culture refers to the practice of creating exaggerated, intriguing, or misleading headlines and content in digital media environments to attract users' attention and increase click-through rates. This culture has become widespread, particularly on social media and video platforms, due to algorithms' focus on interaction (clicks, views, shares). Content creators often prioritize attention-grabbing content over accuracy to achieve greater visibility and economic gain. This can lead to a decrease in information quality, misinformation, and users consuming superficial content. Furthermore, clickbait culture aims to increase interaction by triggering users' emotions (curiosity, anger, surprise, etc.), thus becoming a part of digital surveillance and the attention economy. In this context, improving individuals' media literacy skills plays an important role in mitigating the effects of such content (Akther, 2025; Tufekci, 2015).

MC creators are forced to push the boundaries of their bodily boundaries while presenting their content simultaneously with consumption on camera. Mukbang creators transform eating into a social spectacle in their MC. This performance is constructed in accordance with specific social expectations and media aesthetics. The body is placed at the center of the performance (Gill, 2007). This situation is explained by the Performativity Theory, introduced to the field by Butler (Butler, 1990). "Yuka Kinoshita," a Korean female MC creator, meticulously presents her meals on YouTube. She often interacts with her audience while eating, usually dressed in stylish clothes and makeup. The visually satisfying nature of this type of content leads viewers to appreciate not only the meal but also the visual experience. This reveals how body-focused media representation intertwines with gender norms. In contrast, male MC creators are generally more independent of visual aesthetics and can exhibit a more natural and understated approach in their mukbang videos (McRobbie, 2004). This raises questions about how mukbang differentiates the media representation of male and female bodies and how these differences impact gender norms. In addition to the main criticisms mentioned above, the social and psychological effects of MC cannot be ignored. In a study by Kircaburun et al. (2021), a positive correlation was found between mukbang viewing and problematic eating behaviors in a sample of university students. This finding indicates that mukbang should be considered not only from a cultural or economic perspective, but also from the perspective of individual health.

1.2. Theoretical Background

Mukbang is a hybrid phenomenon that offers a multifaceted analytical opportunity from the perspective of contemporary media studies and digital culture research. In analyzing this phenomenon, media theories, cultural studies, surveillance capitalism, and performance theories should be considered together. In this context, MC has been examined within the framework of five different theories. Firstly, MC is evaluated within the framework of parasocial interaction theory. According to this theory, developed by Horton and Richard Wohl (1956), the relationship established between the viewer and the media figure is one-way; however, it offers a highly real and satisfying social experience for the viewer. These interactions established through MC reveal media figures with whom the viewer forms an emotional bond, incorporates into their daily life, and perceives as a kind of friendship.

Secondly, the mukbang phenomenon gains meaning within the context of participatory culture as conceptualized by Jenkins (2006). While in traditional media systems the viewer is a passive consumer, this boundary has disappeared on digital platforms. Mukbang viewers not only consume content; they comment, participate in live chat, send donations to the broadcaster, or produce their own MC. Thus, mukbang offers a powerful example of a new media culture that horizontalizes the viewer-broadcaster

relationship and encourages participation.

Thirdly, when MC is evaluated within the context of performance theories, Butler's (1990) theory of performativity comes into play. Butler argues that social identities are not inherent, fixed entities, but rather performances constructed through repetitive practices. In this context, the mukbang streamer is not merely an individual eating; they are a performance artist who constructs their body, facial expressions, voice, and eating style through media. The fact that female streamers, in particular, eat large quantities of food while conforming to a certain beauty norm demonstrates how this performativity is intertwined with gender norms. Fourthly, mukbang can be examined within the framework of Debord's (1967) theory of the society of spectacle. According to Debord, in capitalist societies, all aspects of life have come under the dominance of representation and spectacle. Mukbang is also a spectacle practice where food ceases to be merely a physiological need and becomes a visual object of consumption, a part of the attention economy. Large portions, aesthetically pleasing plate presentations, and dramatic reactions are elements placed at the center of the spectacle.

Fifthly, the Uses and Gratifications Theory constitutes one of the prominent frameworks in explaining the consumption of mukbang content. Developed by Katz et al. (1974), this approach conceptualizes individuals not as passive media consumers, but as active users who consciously select media content to fulfill specific needs. According to the theory, individuals derive various gratifications from media use, such as entertainment, information acquisition, escapism, social interaction, and identity development. When mukbang content is evaluated within this context, it is observed that individuals turn to these videos to alleviate feelings of loneliness, escape daily stress, experience a sense of social interaction, and share the dining experience. In particular, the tendency of individuals who dine alone to regard mukbang broadcasts as a "companionship experience" aligns with the theory's dimension of fulfilling the need for social integration and companionship. Furthermore, the relaxing and entertaining nature of mukbang content enables viewers to achieve emotional gratification. In this regard, mukbang viewing can be considered not merely as incidental media consumption, but as a conscious media preference aimed at satisfying specific psychological and social needs.

Sixthly, another approach that can be utilized to explain mukbang content is the Media Dependency Theory. According to the theory developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), as individuals' dependency on media systems increases, the cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects of media on them also intensify. The continuous interaction established between content creators and viewers in digital media environments can lead individuals to develop a dependency on specific media content. The regular tracking of mukbang videos, their perception as a leisure activity, and individuals' gravitation toward this content for psychological relaxation can be explained through the media dependency approach. Notably, the expressions within the "Dependency" dimension emerging from the scope of this study demonstrate that individuals turn to mukbang content not only for entertainment purposes but also to meet their emotional needs. This situation indicates that media dependency is being reproduced within the context of digital content.

Seventhly, the Audience Reception Theory provides an important theoretical framework for explaining how mukbang content is interpreted differently by various individuals. Hall (1980) posits that media messages are encoded with specific meanings by producers; however, audiences can decode these messages in diverse ways based on their own cultural, social, and ideological positions. According to this approach, attitudes toward mukbang content cannot be expected to be uniform. While some individuals evaluate mukbang content as entertaining, social, and relaxing, others may interpret it as a media product that encourages overconsumption, poses health risks, and is ethically problematic. The "Critical View" dimension identified in the study demonstrates that viewers evaluate mukbang content through negotiated or oppositional readings rather than a dominant reading. This findings reveal that audiences do not passively accept media messages; on the contrary, they interpret the content in line with their own value systems.

Eighthly, the digital consumption studies approach also offers a significant theoretical foundation for explaining the mukbang phenomenon. Digital consumption studies suggest that individuals consume not only products but also experiences, emotions, visibility, and social interaction on digital platforms (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). When evaluated in this context, mukbang videos are viewed not merely as content showcasing food consumption, but as digital experiences where consumption is visualized and rendered performative. Viewers do not just watch food; they also consume symbols of consumption culture, lifestyles, and indicators of social status. This situation aligns with Baudrillard's consumption society approach and Debord's society of the spectacle theory. Through mukbang content, the practice of eating transforms into a digital spectacle, and consumption is reproduced through visibility and interaction. Thus, mukbang becomes a consumption performance situated within the attention economy of digital capitalism.

Finally, the production and distribution processes of mukbang can be linked to theories of platform capitalism and surveillance capitalism. As Zuboff (2019) argues, digital platforms are not only tools for hosting content, but also systems that monitor and analyze user behavior and generate economic value from this data. Mukbang publishers are directed to produce content according to YouTube's algorithmic structure; they are encouraged to produce excessive, attention-grabbing, and sometimes even unhealthy content in order to gain more views and recommendations. This clearly demonstrates how content creators are manipulated within structures embedded in digital platforms (Talay, 2022).

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of individuals over 18 years of age residing in Darıca district of Kocaeli province. The sample includes 400 participants. Participants were reached through face-to-face surveys using convenience sampling. Various opinions exist regarding the sample size to be reached in scale development studies. One view suggests that the sample should include 4, 5, or even 10 times the number of scale items (Bryman & Cramer, 2001; Hinkin, 1995; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Another view concerns the number of participants to be reached. According to Kline (1994), at least 100 people should be included in the sample; while according to the view contributed to the field by Gorsuch (2014), a sample of 50 to 200 people is required in scale development studies. In this study, a sample of 400 participants was included for the scale consisting of 24 items. This reflects the views found in the literature and explained above. Based on these views, it is concluded that the sample included in the study as participants represents the population.

2.2. Scale Development Process

First, in this context, the relevant literature was thoroughly reviewed to develop a scale that would determine individuals' attitudes towards MC. Following the literature review, a conceptual framework was created based on the information obtained. Based on this conceptual structure, a question pool was created using the literature (Akther, 2025; Choe, 2019; Fuchs, 2017; Kircaburun et al., 2021; McRobbie, 2004; Tufekci, 2015). The questionnaire initially consisted of 38 items. This questionnaire, comprising 38 items, was submitted to the opinion of 10 experts. This was done to determine the content validity index (CVI) (Ayre & Scally, 2014; Lawshe, 1975; Yeşilyurt & Çapraz, 2018). The experts consulted included 3 faculty members from the Faculty of Health Sciences, 3 from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, and 4 from the Faculty of Communication. A review of the literature shows that the CVI for each draft question should be 0.62 or higher for all 10 experts (Karagöz, 2023; Karagöz & Bardakçı, 2020; Yurdugul & Bayrak, 2012). Following expert opinion, 4 items with a CVI below 0.62 were removed from the draft scale. Detailed information regarding this situation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Expert Opinions on Draft Items.

Item	Experts										M*	D**
	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10		
I1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.9	Accepted
I2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.8	Accepted
I3	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0.9	Accepted
I5	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I6	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I7	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0.8	Accepted
I8	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.3	Rejected
I9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.9	Accepted
I10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.2	Rejected
I11	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0.8	Accepted
I12	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I13	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I14	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0.8	Accepted
I15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0.9	Accepted
I17	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0.7	Accepted
I18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.9	Accepted
I19	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.8	Accepted
I20	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0.8	Accepted
I21	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0.6	Rejected
I22	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I23	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I24	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0.8	Accepted
I25	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I26	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.7	Accepted
I27	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0.4	Rejected
I28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.9	Accepted
I29	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.8	Accepted
I30	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I31	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I32	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.7	Accepted
I33	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.9	Accepted
I34	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.8	Accepted
I35	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0.7	Accepted
I36	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.9	Accepted
I37	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.8	Accepted
I38	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0.7	Accepted

*: Median, **: Decision

Following expert opinion, a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if there were any shortcomings in the draft items. After the pilot study, 2 more items were excluded from the draft scale (For detailed information, see Table 4). The remaining question pool of 32 items was administered twice to 38 participants at four-week intervals. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated based on the participants' answers between the first and second administrations. This coefficient was calculated as 82% (0.82). This shows that the scale has a high consistency between measurements taken with the same people at different times. Following these stages, Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on a sample group of 200 individuals. After the exploratory factor analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed on a separate sample group of 200 individuals.

2.3. Ethical Aspects of the Research

This study received ethical approval from the Istanbul Gedik University Ethics Committee on June 28, 2024, with document number E. 56365223-050.04-2024.137548.149, at meeting number 2024/6. Each participant was informed about the research before contacting them. The Helsinki Declaration was followed during the data collection process.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Findings Regarding EFA

The results of the EFA, which include the factor loadings of the scale items, the amount of variance explained, and the reliability coefficient, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: EFA Results.

Factor	Items	Factor Loadings	Explained Variance (%)	Reliability Coefficient
Addiction Factor	I1: I feel relaxed by watching Mukbang videos	.818	30.711	.936
	I2: Watching Mukbang videos has become an addiction for me	.872		
	I3: I watch Mukbang videos whenever I have the opportunity	.937		
	I4: I specifically follow channels that feature Mukbang videos	.905		
	I5: I specifically follow individuals who produce Mukbang content	.898		
	I7: I watch Mukbang content when I feel bad	.843		
Critical View Factor	I18: I particularly prefer watching Mukbang videos in my free time	.816	23.606	.902
	I12: I feel uncomfortable with Mukbang videos	.813		
	I13: When Mukbang content appears on social media, I immediately scroll to another post	.807		
	I14: Videos containing Mukbang content should be banned	.869		
	I15: I feel disturbed when watching Mukbang content	.855		
Instrumental Approach Factor	I19: Sharing individuals' private lives through Mukbang content violates privacy	.631	9.934	.722
	I16: I think individuals produce Mukbang content only to increase engagement	.524		
	I23: I am skeptical that companies promoting products through mukbang content creators might advertise products that are harmful to society.	.738		
	I24: I think that the situations depicted in mukbang content differ from real-life situations.	.815		
	I25: I believe that individuals who produce mukbang content are engaging in self-promotion	.711		
Negative Reflection Factor	I29: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase obesity	.738	5.349	.908
	I30: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase consumption	.801		
	I31: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase health problems	.823		
	I33: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase eating disorders	.845		
	I34: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase kitchen expenses	.831		
	I35: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase impolite eating habits	.627		
	I36: Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase herd-like eating behavior (eating together)	.735		
	I37: Continuous watching of Mukbang content may evoke nostalgic feelings and increase eating behavior	.601		
Evaluation Criteria				
• Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.880				
• Approximate Chi-Square: 3633.342				
• Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p = 0.000				
• Total Explained Variance: 69.600%				
• Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Overall Scale: 0.847				

According to the results of the EFA presented in Table 2, four additional items were excluded from the scale. The reason for this exclusion is that these items either loaded on multiple factors (cross-loading) or did not load significantly on any factor.

When Table 2 is examined, it is observed that the KMO value ($\alpha = 0.880$) falls within the range of $0.8 \leq \alpha < 1$, indicating an excellent level of sampling adequacy. This result demonstrates that the sample size is sufficient for EFA. In addition, the result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there are high correlations among the variables and that the data are suitable for factor analysis. Based on these two results, it can be concluded that the collected data are adequate for the sample and appropriate for EFA.

As a result of the analysis, the lowest factor loading was identified as 0.524 (Item I16). Factor loadings of 0.400 and above are considered acceptable (Karagöz, 2023; Karagöz & Bardakçı, 2020). The total explained variance was found to be 64.628%, which is also considered sufficient for scale development studies (Karagöz, 2023; Karagöz & Bardakçı, 2020).

Furthermore, the reliability coefficients for the overall scale and its sub-dimensions are as follows: overall scale (24 items, $\alpha = 0.847$), addition factor (7 items, $\alpha = 0.936$), critical view factor (7 items, $\alpha = 0.902$), instrumental approach factor (5 items, $\alpha = 0.722$), and negative reflection factor (9 items, $\alpha = 0.908$). While the reliability coefficient of the instrumental approach factor falls within the range of $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.8$, the reliability coefficients of the addition, critical view, and negative reflection factors, as well as the overall scale, fall within the range of $0.8 \leq \alpha < 1$. Accordingly, the instrumental approach sub-factor can be considered reliable, whereas the other sub-factors and the overall scale demonstrate a high level of reliability (Karagöz, 2023). Following exploratory factor analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using a separate sample of 200 individuals to verify model fit. Detailed information regarding the confirmatory factor analysis is provided below.

3.2. Findings Related to CFA

After determining the scale items through EFA, CFA was conducted to test the degree of fit between the data and the hypothesized model. The model fit diagram related to this analysis is presented in Figure 1.

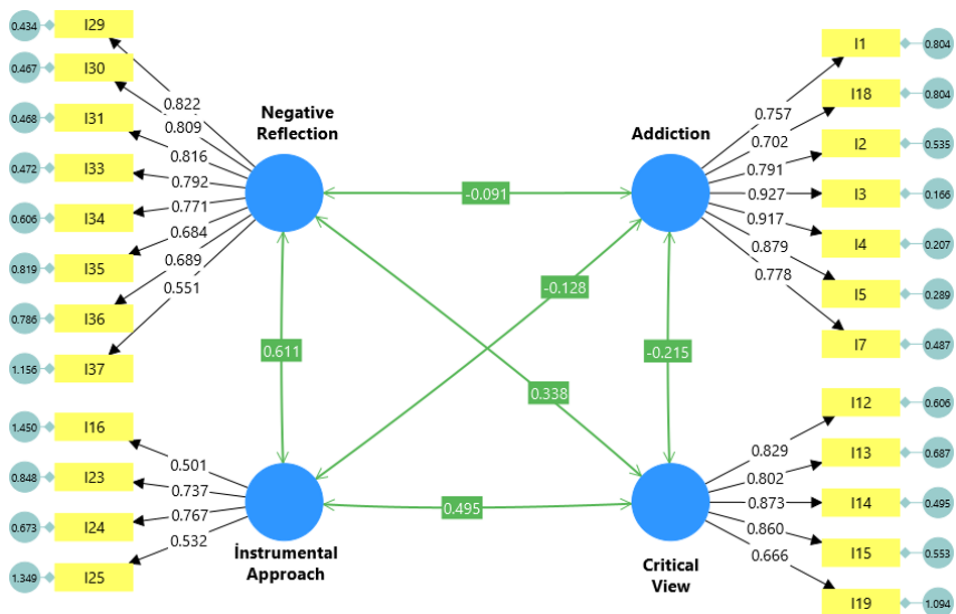


Figure 1: Measurement Model.

As a result of the analysis presented in Figure 1, the model fit indices were obtained as follows: CMIN/df = 3.735 (acceptable value: < 5); GFI = 0.834 (acceptable value: > 0.800); NFI = 0.863 (acceptable value: > 0.800); IFI = 0.896 (acceptable value: > 0.800); RFI = 0.846 (acceptable value: > 0.800); TLI = 0.882 (acceptable value: > 0.800); CFI = 0.895 (acceptable value: > 0.800); RMSEA = 0.077 (acceptable value: < 0.08); and SRMR = 0.067 (acceptable value: < 0.08) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001; Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011; Munro, 2005; Schumacher & Lomax, 2010).

When the statistical results of the fit indices are examined, it is evident that the model demonstrates acceptable and good levels of fit. This finding statistically supports the structural validity of the model. The results of the CFA for the refined measurement model identified within the scope of the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: CFA Results for the Refined Measurement Model.

Factor	Items	Estimate	S.E	t	P	AVE	CR
Addiction Factor	I1	1.000			***		
	I2	0.910	0.054	16.943	***		
	I3	0.971	0.048	20.294	***		
	I4	1.008	0.051	19.897	***	.682	.933
	I5	0.952	0.050	18.892	***		
	I7	0.831	0.050	16.516	***		
Critical View Factor	I18	0.849	0.058	14.599			
	I12	1.000			***		
	I13	0.965	0.051	18.808	***		
	I14	1.093	0.052	20.943	***	.655	.905
	I15	1.085	0.053	20.353	***		
	I19	0.808	0.056	14.549	***		
Instrumental Approach Factor	I16	1.000			***		
	I23	1.441	0.194	7.427	***	.416	.729
	I24	1.404	0.187	7.504	***		
	I25	1.045	0.136	7.677	***		
	I29	1.000			***		
	I30	0.986	0.052	19.100	***		
Negative Reflection Factor	I31	1.014	0.053	19.301	***		
	I33	0.935	0.052	17.868	***	.558	.906
	I34	0.990	0.058	16.960	***		
	I35	0.891	0.061	14.697	***		
	I36	0.885	0.060	14.685	***		
	I37	0.746	0.066	11.291	***		

It was determined that the p-values for all item-factor relationships presented in Table 3 are less than 0.001. This statistically significant result indicates that the items are correctly loaded onto their respective factors.

As a result of the statistical analyses, it was found that the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value for one of the four sub-dimensions of the developed scale (Instrumental Approach) is below the threshold of 0.50. However, when the AVE value is below 0.50, a Composite Reliability (CR) value of 0.60 or higher indicates that convergent validity is still achieved (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the literature, there are several scale development studies that adopt this criterion (Ermiş et al., 2025; Karaşın & Karagöz, 2023; Kocabaş et al., 2025; Öztürk et al., 2025).

Table 4 presents items excluded from the scale and reasons for their exclusion.

Table 4: Items Excluded from the Evaluation.

Excluded Item		Reason for Exclusion
I11	Determination that the item was not understood as a result of the pilot study	
I38	Determination that the item was not understood as a result of the pilot study	
I6	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I9	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I17	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I20	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I22	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I26	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I28	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	
I32	Item found to be cross-loading or failing to load under any factor following explanatory factor analysis	

3.3. Findings on Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is utilized to determine whether factors in a multi-factor structure are mutually independent and whether each factor measures a distinct construct. In other words, it assesses whether each construct within a model is unique and captures a phenomenon not represented by other factors (Ringle et al., 2014). To establish discriminant validity, methods such as the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), and Average Shared Variance (ASV) are widely employed (Ringle et al., 2014). Within the scope of this study, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT methods were adopted. The results regarding the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Values.

	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
Critical View <-> Addiction	.251
Negative Reflection <-> Addiction	.116
Negative Reflection <-> Critical View	.358
Instrumental Approach <-> Addiction	.160
Instrumental Approach <-> Critical View	.618
Instrumental Approach <-> Negative Reflection	.628

n the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method, the average correlations between item indicators of different dimensions are calculated to demonstrate that these dimensions measure distinct constructs. When establishing discriminant validity between different constructs in a scale, a threshold value of 0.85 (or 0.90) is used as a benchmark for the HTMT value. Specifically, if the calculated HTMT value is below this critical threshold, it indicates that the dimensions (factors) are sufficiently distinct from one another, thereby confirming the discriminant validity of the scale. Conversely, if the HTMT value exceeds this threshold, it implies a lack of discriminant validity, suggesting a high degree of overlap between the dimensions meaning they measure the same underlying phenomenon (Ringle et al., 2014). An examination of Table 5 reveals that the HTMT values between Critical View and Addiction (.251), Negative Reflection and Addiction (.116), Negative Reflection and Critical View (.358), Instrumental Approach and Addiction (.160), Instrumental Approach and Critical View (.618), and Instrumental Approach and Negative Reflection (.628) are all below the .85 threshold. These findings systematically demonstrate that discriminant validity is well-established among the dimensions. Another widely accepted method for determining discriminant validity is the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of two factors with the squared correlation between them. To satisfy the requirements of discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE for each factor must be greater than the correlation coefficient between the two factors. This comparison is systematically conducted for all pairwise combinations of factors within the scale. The underlying logic of this procedure is that a factor should explain more variance within its own indicators than it shares with any other factor. Detailed information regarding this situation is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Table.

	Addiction	Critical View	Negative Reflection	Instrumental Approach
Addiction	0.826			
Critical View	-0.215	0.809		
Negative Reflection	-0.091	0.338	0.747	
Instrumental Approach	-0.128	0.495	0.611	0.645

An examination of the information presented in Table 6 indicates that the square root of the AVE value for the Addiction dimension (0.826) is greater than all inter-dimension correlation values located in the corresponding row and column for Addiction (-0.215, -0.091, and -0.128). Similarly, the square root of the AVE for the Critical View dimension (0.809) exceeds all correlation values in its respective row and column (-0.215, 0.338, and 0.495). For the Negative Reflection dimension, the square root of the AVE value (0.747) is also greater than all inter-dimension correlations in the associated row and column (-0.091, 0.338, and 0.495). Finally, the square root of the AVE for the Instrumental Approach dimension (0.645) is greater than all correlation values found within its corresponding row and column (-0.128, 0.495, and 0.611).

Since all the aforementioned conditions are fully satisfied, it is concluded that discriminant validity is established according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

4. DISCUSSION

It is possible to see studies in the scientific literature regarding the concept of mukbang, defined as eating behavior simultaneously with the consumer (Choe, 2019; Fuchs, 2017). In the literature, the concept of mukbang is mostly focused on analyzing videos related to MC (Fuchs, 2017; van Dijck, 2013) and determining individuals' psychological attitudes (Kircaburun et al., 2021). This situation leads to psychological relaxation for individuals. The Addiction sub-dimension of the measurement tool developed within the scope of this study shows similarities with these studies in the literature. It is observed that both the creators and consumers of MC are increasing day by day all over the world. Content creators receive various forms of support through this medium. This leads to financial gain for content creators. The Instrumental Approach sub-factor of the measurement tool developed within the scope of this study shows similarities to these situations. It is seen that MC directs individuals towards consumption, and especially for women, bodies are objectified. This situation shows similarities to the Negative Reflection sub-factor of the measurement tool developed within the scope of this study. Another sub-factor of the measurement tool developed within the scope of this study is the Critical View sub-factor. According to this factor, the individuals included in the study as participants have a critical view on mukbang. This attitude differs from the literature.

The mukbang phenomenon, with the transformation of digital media culture, has evolved from being

merely an entertainment-based form of content production into a multi-dimensional media practice evaluated within the context of consumer culture, digital sociality, body politics, and platform capitalism. The “Attitude Scale Towards MC,” developed within the scope of this study, examines individuals’ attitudes towards MC under four dimensions, thus contributing a psychometric measurement tool to the literature that was previously lacking. The fact that the scale’s four-factor structure—“Addiction,” “Critical View,” “Instrumental Approach,” and “Negative Reflection”—was validated through both EFA and CFA statistically supports the multi-dimensional nature of the mukbang phenomenon.

The “addiction” dimension revealed in the research shows that individuals view MC not only as a viewing practice but also as a means of psychological relief, daily escape, and emotional regulation. In particular, the fact that individuals turn to MC when they feel bad or during their free time reveals that this content offers a functional “companionship experience” in the digital environment. This finding aligns with Horton and Richard Wohl’s (1956) parasocial interaction theory. According to this theory, individuals can establish one-way but emotionally intense relationships with media figures. These relationships established with MC creators reduce feelings of loneliness and produce a symbolic sense of social closeness in the digital environment. In addition, the findings support the problematic relationship between mukbang viewing and internet addiction presented by Kircaburun et al. (2021). Therefore, it can be said that MC is not only entertainment-oriented but also digital content with the potential to produce behavioral addiction.

The second dimension of the scale, “Critical View,” shows that individuals develop ethical, cultural, and socially based critical evaluations of MC. Participants finding MC disturbing, believing it to be contrary to social values, and evaluating it in the context of privacy violations, reveals the existence of social sensitivities regarding the limits of visibility in digital media environments. This situation can be evaluated within the framework of Debord’s (1967) theory of the spectacle society. In the spectacle society, even everyday life practices are transformed into visual objects of consumption, and individuals’ private spaces are commodified through digital platforms. The constant visibility of eating practices and the opening of private spaces to public consumption in MC are critically evaluated by the participants. In this respect, the study differs from the entertainment, socialization, and digital interaction-focused approaches frequently emphasized in mukbang literature; it reveals that individuals develop normative and ethical evaluations of this content.

The “Instrumental Approach” dimension identified within the scope of the research shows that individuals view MC as an output of the digital platform economy. The participants’ belief that MC is produced for the purpose of gaining followers, achieving visibility, and generating economic gain parallels Zuboff’s (2019) approach to surveillance capitalism. Digital platforms direct the attention economy by analyzing user behavior in a data-driven manner; content creators are encouraged to produce more attention-grabbing and high-interaction potential content in order to gain algorithmic visibility. In this context, MC can be considered not only an individual sharing practice but also a media performance transformed into economic value within the digital capitalist system. In particular, the fact that content creators produce content that encourages consumption and centers on excess can also be linked to van Dijck’s (2013) platformization approach and Fuchs’ (2017) discussions on digital labor. Therefore, research findings indicate that individuals are aware of the economic and algorithmic motivations behind MC.

The final dimension of the study, “Negative Impact,” reveals perceptions of the potential effects of MC on individual health, consumption behaviors, and societal habits. Participants believe that MC may increase obesity, overconsumption, eating disorders, and unhealthy eating behaviors. These findings are consistent with research results presented by Sharps and Robinson (2016), Kircaburun et al. (2021), and Bölükbaşı et al. (2025). The high factor loadings of items related to increased appetite,

overconsumption, and the normalization of eating behaviors suggest that MC may have behavioral and psychological effects on individuals' relationship with food. When evaluated within the context of Baudrillard's (1981) theory of simulacra, mukbang represents the process of transforming food from a biological necessity into a visual object of pleasure. This situation reveals that food is distanced from its true function and becomes part of a digital spectacle.

One of the striking findings of the research is that individuals can simultaneously develop an addiction to MC and maintain a critical attitude towards it. This reflects the contradictory consumption practices frequently encountered in digital media consumption. On the one hand, individuals may view MC as a relaxing, fun, and social experience; on the other hand, they may be aware of the social and individual harms of this content. This dual structure shows that digital media users are not entirely passive consumers; rather, they have transformed into active subjects capable of critically evaluating media content.

The study has several limitations. Firstly, the fact that the research was conducted only in Darica district of Kocaeli province limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the use of convenience sampling may prevent equal representation of different socio-demographic groups in the study. Also, the cross-sectional design of the study does not provide an opportunity to examine the change in individuals' attitudes towards MC over time. It is recommended that comparative studies be conducted between different age groups, cultural structures, and countries in future research. In addition, examining the relationships between mukbang viewing frequency and loneliness, body image, social comparison, consumption behaviors, and eating disorders using structural equation modeling could make significant contributions to the literature.

5. CONCLUSION

A measurement tool that determines individuals' attitudes towards MC has been introduced to the field. The absence of a similar measurement tool in the field makes this study significant. The scale developed within the scope of this study is expected to be pioneering and guiding in the field.

This study developed a valid and reliable measurement tool to determine individuals' attitudes towards MC. Based on the results of the EFA and CFA, the scale was determined to have a four-dimensional structure consisting of "Addiction," "Critical View," "Instrumental Approach," and "Negative Reflection." Examining the fit indices, explained variance ratios, Cronbach's Alpha, AVE, and CR values of the scale, it was concluded that the developed measurement tool provides acceptable levels of validity and reliability from a psychometric perspective. In this context, the study fills an important gap in the literature regarding the measurement of attitudes towards MC.

Research findings indicate that MC is not merely an entertainment-based digital media practice for individuals; it is also considered a multi-layered phenomenon with psychological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. The "Addiction" dimension of the scale reveals that individuals evaluate MC in the context of emotional relief, daily escape, and digital companionship experiences. This suggests that MC has transformed into a functional form of media consumption within individuals' daily life practices.

The "addiction" dimension identified in the study can be evaluated not only through the lens of parasocial interaction theory but also within the frameworks of Uses and Gratifications Theory and Media Dependency Theory. The fact that participants watch mukbang content for psychological relief, leisure, and emotional support indicates that this content has evolved into a form of media that fulfills specific individual needs. Similarly, the media dependency perspective suggests that mukbang content can reinforce tendencies toward behavioral addiction by becoming a regular part of individuals' daily routines.

The findings regarding the “Critical View” dimension reveal that individuals develop ethically, culturally, and socially based critical evaluations of MC. Participants’ evaluations of MC in terms of privacy violation, excessive visibility, and contradiction to social values demonstrate a growing social awareness of digital media content. This indicates a strengthening of a critical approach towards the spectacle culture that has become commonplace on digital platforms.

The “Critical View” dimension identified in the study gains significance within the context of Audience Reception Theory. The fact that participants develop critical evaluations of mukbang content demonstrates that viewers do not passively accept media messages. Consequently, mukbang content is interpreted in various ways by different audience groups, revealing the multi-layered nature of media content reception processes.

The “Instrumental Approach” dimension identified in the research shows that individuals evaluate MC within the context of the digital platform economy and algorithmic visibility. The fact that participants perceive MC as content produced for the purpose of gaining followers, increasing engagement, and generating economic gain reveals that digital media platforms operate within the framework of the attention economy. This result shows that MC is not only individual content creation but also a media practice transformed into economic value within platform capitalism.

The findings regarding the “Negative Impact” dimension reveal a strong perception that MC can have negative effects on individuals’ consumption behaviors, eating habits, and health perceptions. In particular, the high factor loadings of expressions related to obesity, overconsumption, increased appetite, and eating disorders indicate a high level of societal awareness regarding the potential impact of MC on individual behaviors.

The Instrumental Approach and Negative Reflection dimensions can be evaluated through the perspective of digital consumption studies. The participants’ perception of mukbang content as media products created for the purposes of economic gain, visibility, and promoting consumption highlights how digital platforms reproduce consumer culture. This situation demonstrates that mukbang content is not merely an individual form of media production, but also a consumption practice shaped within the attention economy of digital capitalism.

In conclusion, this study contributes theoretically and methodologically to the literature on measuring attitudes towards MC. The developed scale is expected to be a functional measurement tool that can be used in research conducted in various disciplines, primarily communication sciences, media studies, sociology, psychology, and health sciences. Furthermore, applying the scale to different cultural samples may contribute to a more comprehensive evaluation of the cross-cultural dimension of the mukbang phenomenon. It is also suggested that future research should examine attitudes towards MC in relation to variables such as loneliness, body image, digital addiction, social comparison, and consumer behavior.

6. LIMITATIONS

As with any study, the present research is subject to several limitations. First, the sample group is exclusively comprised of individuals aged 18 and older residing in Darıca/Kocaeli, Türkiye. Future studies are therefore recommended to diversify the sample composition. Another limitation of this study pertains to the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of the Instrumental Approach dimension, which fell below the 0.50 threshold. Since the indicators defining mukbang are categorized under this dimension, these items were retained in the study rather than being excluded. Given that the Composite Reliability (CR) value of the dimension exceeded 0.60, its retention in the measurement tool was deemed appropriate, supported by relevant literature. Although this issue is addressed

comprehensively within the study, the fact that the AVE value of the Instrumental Approach dimension remains below 0.50 constitutes a limitation. Additionally, a criterion-related validity analysis was not conducted within the scope of this study. Because the current research primarily focused on the scale development process, criterion-related validity was not explicitly addressed, which represents another limitation of the study. Finally, regarding test-retest reliability, only the Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized, while the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) was not determined. The rationale for this approach is the existence of established scale development studies in the literature that have relied solely on the Pearson correlation coefficient. Consequently, this methodological choice was implemented and justified through existing literature.

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APPENDIX: MUKBANG CONTENT ATTITUDE SCALE

The scale presented below is structured as a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The scale consists of four sub-dimensions:

- Items 1–7 represent the **Addiction** sub-dimension,
- Items 8–12 represent the **Critical View** sub-dimension,
- Items 13–16 represent the **Instrumental Approach** sub-dimension,
- Items 17–24 represent the **Negative Reflection** sub-dimension.

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel relaxed by watching Mukbang videos					
2	Watching Mukbang videos has become an addiction for me					
3	I watch Mukbang videos whenever I have the opportunity					
4	I specifically follow channels that feature Mukbang videos					
5	I specifically follow individuals who produce Mukbang content					
6	I watch Mukbang content when I feel bad					
7	I particularly prefer watching Mukbang videos in my free time					
8	I feel uncomfortable with Mukbang videos					
9	When Mukbang content appears on social media, I immediately scroll to another post					
10	Videos containing Mukbang content should be banned					
11	I feel disturbed when watching Mukbang content					
12	Sharing individuals' private lives through Mukbang content violates privacy					
13	I think individuals produce Mukbang content only to increase engagement					
14	I am skeptical that companies promoting products through mukbang content creators might advertise products that are harmful to society.					
15	I think that the situations depicted in mukbang content differ from real-life situations.					
16	I believe that individuals who produce mukbang content are engaging in self-promotion					
17	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase obesity					
18	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase consumption					
19	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase health problems					
20	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase eating disorders					
21	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase kitchen expenses					
22	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase impolite eating habits					
23	Continuous watching of Mukbang content will increase herd-like eating behavior (eating together)					
24	Continuous watching of Mukbang content may evoke nostalgic feelings and increase eating behavior					