

Utrecht University

From Let's Play to Let's Eat

How YouTube's Affordances Influenced the Growth of Mōkpang

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1. Abstract

Videos of people eating food are a big trend on YouTube, but not everyone understands the hype behind this genre called mŏkpang. This thesis examines the affordances of YouTube in relation to the South Korean mŏkpang phenomenon to create a better understanding. Based on an existing study on Let's Play by Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler, this thesis uses a context analysis to examine several mŏkpang videos from South Korean micro-celebrity Bazz. By looking at the affordances of YouTube and how Bazz uses them, I illustrate how the affordances helped a cultural niche grow into a worldwide phenomenon. I argue that because YouTube is more concentrated on content affordances, specifically content discovery and content sharing, using YouTube as platform helped mŏkpang break free from its cultural boundaries and evolve from a local phenomenon into a genre with its own subgenres.

Keywords: YouTube, technical affordances, context analysis, micro-celebrity, affordance analysis, Let's Play videos, mŏkpang

2. Introduction

In the summer of 2016, video streaming platform Twitch introduced its users to the South Korean *mökpang* phenomenon by adding the ‘social eating’ category to its website (Berrones 2016). *Mökpang*, which translates to ‘eating show’, is a type of video in which people record themselves while eating food. The word *mökpang* is a portmanteau made-up of *möngnün*, meaning “eating” and *pangsong*, meaning “broadcast”. In South Korea, recording yourself while eating became popular around mid-2010s (Lee 2015). The people creating these videos are known as *mökpang* broadcast jockeys, broadcast jockey meaning someone who records themselves performing activities. During these broadcasts, the broadcast jockeys are either preparing or have prepared a meal that they will eat. Unlike cooking shows, the focus is not on the preparation of food, but on the actual eating. A numerous amount of Twitch users expressed their confusion about this new category (Korlian81 2016). They do not understand why people would enjoy *mökpang* videos. However, experiencing vicarious pleasures by watching videos is not something new. Another popular type of video where a person records an everyday activity already exists. These videos are called Let’s Play videos or Let’s Plays and show recorded gameplay footage (Glas 2015). Like *mökpang*, these videos do not necessarily have to show spectacular events but can just be about casual gaming. Sometimes the videos include a recording of the player’s face while he or she is playing the game. Most of the pre-recorded Let’s Play videos can be found on YouTube. Since the online video platform is easily accessible around the world, Let’s Plays quickly gained a large global audience. Besides hosting an enormous number of videos, YouTube provides their users with features that make uploading videos an easy process. There are also features for content creators that aim for more than casually uploading videos. The combination of YouTube being easily accessible, and its technical affordances has helped regular content creators become micro-celebrities. An example of a micro-celebrity is one of the most popular Let’s Play

creators Mark Fischbach, better known as Markiplier. The amount of income he receives from his videos is enough for him to make a living out of it (Berg 2016). Examples such as Markiplier are one of the reasons why creating online content have piqued the interest of people who aim to become a micro-celebrity. The result is that user generated content and the creation of content are appealing to a wide variety of people and are not limited to a certain genre.

Considering that playing games is a popular form of entertainment, the act of watching online videos to see other people playing games and experiencing vicarious pleasure from it does not seem strange. Experiencing the same kind of pleasure from watching others eat, on the other hand, does strike as a bit peculiar. Nevertheless, the South Korean *mökpang* phenomenon appears to be following the same path as the Let's Play videos, despite of *mökpang* coming from a completely different cultural background. An evident common ground is that both genres can be found on YouTube. With this in mind, the question I pose for this thesis is: how can we understand the *mökpang* phenomenon by examining a broadcast jockey's usage of YouTube's affordances through a Let's Play lens? To answer this question, I examine three aspects. The first aspect is the context in which *mökpang* is situated. Second are the affordances of YouTube, and third, I concentrate on the videos of the South Korean micro-celebrity Banzz. More details about the thesis structure are explained later in this introduction.

There are few academic articles on *mökpang* and most of them are written in Korean. In one of the articles, social scientists Hong Sökyöng and Pak Sojöng conclude that there is a strong correlation between the rising number of single-person households and the rising number of *mökpang* videos. They claim that *mökpang* is a form of social communication that developed in a South Korean socio-historical context (S. Hong and Pak 2016). Another study questioned why *mökpang* keeps drawing in viewers. Social scientists Mun Yöngün et al. interviewed fourteen people between the ages twenty and thirty and state that this age group is under heavy social pressure to maintain a slim figure, which is a beauty standard in South

Korea. Mōkpang offers this age group a release from this social pressure by allowing them to indulge in food without any accompanying consequences (Mun, Sim, and Pak 2017). The few English articles are mainly non-academic articles that focus on the emergence of the new trend and the amount of money the broadcast jockeys earn (E. Hong 2016; Gibbs 2015; Van der Veen 2017). There is a short English essay on mōkpang in relation to femininity and food consumption (Schwegler-Castañer 2018). It mentions that mōkpang can be seen as an ASMR¹ experience, as fetishizing women eating, or as a protest against high beauty standards, but due to the short length of the essay, it does not offer in-depth information. All these articles provide clear reasoning why mōkpang videos are appealing to different groups of people, but they do not discuss the platform where mōkpang can be found. Thus, I approach this subject from a new media perspective by focusing on YouTube, which the next paragraph explains in more detail.

Naturally, those who do not understand Korean cannot easily access information on mōkpang as most articles are only written in Korean. As mentioned earlier, the English articles do not offer in-depth information. Moreover, the Korean articles only focus on the phenomenon in South Korea and only study mōkpang from a South Korean perspective. Since the phenomenon is no longer confined to South Korea, claims such as South Korea's high beauty standard being the reason why mōkpang is successful are no longer sufficient. Another existing gap in the already scarce research of mōkpang is that most, if not all, studies are done from a socio-cultural approach. They either study the mōkpang broadcast jockey or the viewers, but the platform is neglected. The aim of my thesis is to contribute to the knowledge on mōkpang from a non-Korean perspective and to apply a new media approach by focusing on YouTube

¹ ASMR is short for autonomous sensory meridian response, which is often described as a tingling sensation. This sensation can be triggered by certain sounds or images. Creators of ASMR videos often try to trigger this response by recording themselves whispering or eating.

rather than cultural motives. It provides a small steppingstone towards our understanding of mök pang, which is helpful for future research on the subject.

Following this introduction, I present the theoretical framework, which discusses several important concepts, namely mök pang (Adema 2000; Joseph 2015; Hu 2015; Chung 2016), Let's Play (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014; Burwell and Miller 2016), and micro-celebrities (Senft 2008; Wesch 2009; Alice Marwick 2013). The fourth chapter starts off with a methodology section and includes analyses that tackle the different aspects of the research question. As for the different aspects of this research, the first one is about the similarities between Let's Play and mök pang. The focus here are the concepts that are associated with Let's Play, namely micro-celebrities (Taylor 2018, 32) and vicarious pleasure (Glas 2015). The relation between these concepts and mök pang is examined in the theoretical framework and illustrated by analysing Bazz's videos in chapter four. The second aspect of the research question is the relation between mök pang and the affordances of YouTube since YouTube is the most accessible online platform to watch mök pang videos. The affordances analysis on YouTube by O'Riordan et al. is used to see how the affordances apply to mök pang (2012). YouTube has a live stream function, but to narrow down the scope of this thesis I only focus on pre-recorded mök pang videos. How the previous two aspects are reflected in Bazz's mök pang videos is shown by following the steps of the contextual analysis conducted by Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler for their study on Let's Play (2015). Two videos are chosen based on the availability of English subtitles and the date on which they were published. More details about the methodology can be found in chapter four. This thesis ends with a conclusion where I summarize my findings and discuss the possibilities for future studies. I hope to provide insight to the key role of YouTube's affordances in the mök pang phenomenon.

3. Theoretical Framework

This thesis touches upon several different topics, namely YouTube, micro-celebrities, Let's Play and mökpang. The purpose of this chapter is creating an academic context in which these concepts are situated for those who are unfamiliar with these topics. It starts off with the most important concept of this thesis, namely mökpang. The article by Pauline Adema is thoroughly discussed as she examines the role of food television (2000). The section ends with a quote by popular broadcast jockey The Diva who talks about her fans. This leads to the next section: micro-celebrities. In this section I examine micro-celebrities by discussing Theresa Senft's work and the relation between micro-celebrity and YouTube (2008). I then move from micro-celebrities to one of the genres on YouTube with popular micro-celebrities, which is Let's Play. This section provides an introduction to the Let's Play phenomenon and discusses studies done on this subject (Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler 2015; Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014). Finally, I take a closer look at the platform that hosts all the previous mentioned concepts, that is YouTube. I examine how YouTube is used as a social media platform by discussing an analysis done by O'Riordan et al. (2012). By the end of this theoretical framework, I hope to have situated all the concepts in their academic context and clarified the link between mökpang and Let's Play.

3.1 Food for Fun

The main subject of this thesis is the mökpang phenomenon. Mökpang is a Korean word; however, Koreans do not use the Latin script. Instead they use the Korean alphabet known as hangul. Because there are several methods of romanization, there is a variety of ways people transcribe mökpang. The most common ones are: mökpang, mukbang, and meokbang. In this thesis, I use the McCune–Reischauer system,² which means I use “mökpang” to spell

² The McCune-Reischauer system is one of the most widely used romanization methods of the Korean language and used to be the official romanization system in South Korea.

the word. Besides romanization, people in Western countries have also used another term to refer to mǒkpang. For example, Twitch created a category called “social eating” for people to create and watch mǒkpang videos. Originally, “social eating” was used to describe an activity where people get together at a social setting and have a meal or some drinks (Courtneykender 2016). This could mean that people who refer to mǒkpang as social eating consider the social aspect to play an important role in the mǒkpang phenomenon.

Regarding the different roles of food in media, Pauline Adema, a cultural anthropologist specialized in studies on food and America, examines the role of food television in popular culture in the United States. According to Adema, “food and television have been closely linked, both on and off screen” (2000, 114). Her focus lies on the popularity of Food Network, a channel dedicated to food programmes, and on Emeril Lagasse, Food Network’s celebrity chef. She says that the popularity of Food Network confirms how some Americans are almost obsessed with food (2000, 114). The same could be said for mǒkpang on a global level. Searching for “mukbang” videos on YouTube shows people from different nationalities participating in the mǒkpang genre. Following Adema’s reasoning, the popularity confirms how some people from all over the world are almost obsessed with food. Quoting philosopher Elizabeth Telfer’s suggestion: “people with leisure time and ample food resources devote more attention to food than is needed to stay alive because we think food will give us pleasure” (2000, 114). Just like Food Network, mǒkpang has little to do with the nutritional value of food or teaching its viewers how to cook but is all about entertainment. Broadcast jockeys pay a lot of attention to the taste of the food, but do not talk about any health benefits. Also, the enormous amount of food broadcast jockeys, such as Banzz, eat undeniably indicates that it has little to do with nutritional value.

However, it takes more than only food to create a successful channel. The response of the viewer must be considered when trying to create a popular programme. Food Network tried

to become more appealing by making its programmes more personality driven. This is where TV personalities, such as Emeril Lagasse, come into play. As both Adema and communication scholar Cheri Ketchum show, Lagasse is a regular, everyday man, who uses everyday language instead of cooking jargon (Adema 2000, 115–17; Ketchum 2005, 225). He makes cooking accessible for everyone, which in turn makes him appealing for a wide audience. People no longer watch just to see new recipes, but to see others cook, and more specifically, to be entertained by that certain individual (Magee 2007). As Adema puts it: “being a couch potato, a consumer of food television, becomes more pleasurable than actually cooking and eating” (2000, 116). In the case of *mökpang*, broadcast jockeys often provide their viewers the opportunity to communicate with them through live chat. Even if there is no live chat available, most broadcast jockeys talk about their everyday life during the broadcast, creating a bond between the viewer and the creator. Some broadcast jockeys choose to provide another form of entertainment by eating excessive amounts of food. They thrive on the shock value as some broadcast jockeys can eat portions that can feed an entire family.

Adema mentions the term “cultural capital” to explain why food television is considered a threat to social hierarchy. The term “cultural capital” was used by Pierre Bourdieu to explain “the means by which distinctions between social classes could be expressed and reinforced” (Adema 2000, 117). Gourmet foods and cooking techniques used to be only known to the upper level of society, the elite. Since the rise of Food Network, these gourmet foods and techniques became more and more known to other layers in society. The result is that when more people become familiar with these kind of things, the less became the value of gourmet food and cooking techniques as cultural capital (Adema 2000, 117; Kirkwood 2014). Regarding *mökpang*, cultural capital would not just refer to distinctions between social classes, but also between different cultures. Food in media “present a gastronomic world far removed from the world of many readers where we may find recipes requiring esoteric and exotic

ingredients not likely to be found in the average kitchen” (Magee 2007). This makes food programmes a convenient way to experience new types of food (Adema 2000, 119; Kirkwood 2014). Mōkpang started out as a South Korean phenomenon, thus most meals in the videos are Korean food, but since the rise of mōkpang, Korean food became increasingly more known to people from other cultures. An example is the “fire noodle challenge” (Matthew 2015). This is a challenge that went viral on YouTube, but actually started out because an Englishman living in Korea recorded his friends from London trying one of Korea’s spiciest noodle (Korean Englishman 2014). The noodles became popular on the global market, not because it is Korean, but because of how spicy it is. This is an example of how mōkpang causes the value of, in this case, Korean food as cultural capital to decrease.

Besides food being an object to give us pleasure and new experiences, Adema names several other reasons why people like to watch food television. One of them is the feeling of nostalgia as twenty years ago, cooking and eating a meal together is seen as quality time and provides us comfort, but now is considered a rare activity (Adema 2000, 118). However, people still think of cooking and eating as something that should be shared with others (Magee 2007). Food programme provides the viewers with this comfort as they allow the viewer to be “together” with the TV individual during meal time (Adema 2000, 118). This is one of the reasons why mōkpang exists (S. Hong and Pak 2016). Most Koreans leave their parental home to live near their university or to find a job. Even those who have a relationship live alone as it is considered taboo to live together before marriage. At the same time, the value of marriage is decreasing in South Korea (Yazdanifard and Hakimey 2015, 449). The result is that many young Koreans are living on their own for a long period. Mōkpang is a way to combat the feeling of loneliness these Koreans may experience. Most mōkpang videos were originally live videos that were streamed on the South Korean streaming platform AfreecaTV which stands for “Any FREE broadCasting TV” (‘AfreecaTV’ n.d.). Since mōkpang was a live streaming

video, the viewers could directly interact with the broadcast jockey by leaving comments. “While they are watching these shows, they feel connected” (Park 2014).

Another reason to watch food television is that it enables the viewer to “consume” food without any consequences (Kirkwood 2014). Especially in Korea where indulgence is frowned upon and where society has high health and beauty standards, food television can satisfy its viewers through vicarious consumption. Adema supports this statement by saying that it “offers vicarious pleasure for the arm chair cook and the couch potato alike” (2000, 114). Several other studies also came to the conclusion that food in media provides viewers with vicarious pleasure (Kirkwood 2014; Rousseau 2013; Magee 2007). Like Kirkwood, Adema also claims that food television is popular, because it allows viewers to indulge in vicarious pleasure without breaking their diet (2000, 118–19). As broadcast jockey The Diva explains: “my fans tell me that they really love watching me eat because I do so with so much gusto and make everything look so delicious. A lot of my viewers are on diets and they say they live vicariously through me, or they are hospital patients who only have access to hospital food so they also watch my broadcasts to see me eat” (Yazdanifard and Hakimey 2015, 447).

3.2 Micro-celebrity

In the previous quote, The Diva referred to her viewers as her fans. Content creators who refer to their audience as fans are often called micro-celebrities (Alice Marwick and Boyd 2011, 141), but what exactly is a micro-celebrity? The term ‘micro-celebrity’ was first introduced by media scholar Theresa Senft. She says that “micro-celebrity is best understood as a new style of online performance that involves people ‘amping up’ their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites. Micro-celebrity sometimes looks like conventional celebrity, but the two aren’t the same” (Senft 2008, 25). Micro-celebrity can also be understood as “a mindset and set of practices in which the audience is constructed as a fan base, popularity is maintained through ongoing fan management, and

selfpresentation is carefully assembled to be consumed by others” (A. Marwick 2015, 6). A big difference between a micro-celebrity and a conventional celebrity is that viewers assume micro-celebrities are more ‘real’ than conventional celebrities (Senft 2008, 25). There are several factors that help establish this reasoning. Since micro-celebrities often create their own content from within their own private space, their content may come across as more genuine than the actions of an actor or musician, as these celebrities put on performances for a living and therefore it is never clear when they are truly behaving as themselves. One notable author who wrote about the relationship between creators and viewers is cultural anthropologist Michael Wesch. He claims that YouTube allows for a deep connection and at the same time for a loose connection. The deep connection exists because content creators find it easy to share personal stories on YouTube. Simultaneously, the connection is also loose, because the relationship between content creators and their viewers remains distant without the responsibilities of a face-to-face relationship (Wesch 2009, 27). Because of the deep connection, viewers are likely to feel more connected to micro-celebrities than to conventional celebrities. The same reasoning can be applied to the connection between broadcast jockeys and their viewers. In the previous section I discussed that some people prefer to watch a personality driven *mōkpang* and, if possible, communicate with them to fight the feeling of loneliness. During the *mōkpang*, broadcast jockeys would often share personal stories, which creates the same deep and loose connection Wesch is talking about (2009, 27).

With the rise of free user-generated content and the ease of sharing content online, several people became well-known by a global audience. Due to technological advances, affordances of digital platforms have made it easier for people to become internet famous (Alice Marwick 2013, 115). This is also the case for content creators on YouTube. While some creators and their content went viral or turned into memetic videos (Shifman 2013, 73–74), for example Chris Crocker’s plead to leave Britney Spears alone and baby Charlie who bit Harry’s

finger, others have risen to conventional stardom, for instance singers Justin Bieber and Ed Sheeran. Not necessarily because their content is created with great technique, but rather because of the social appraisal they received (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013). Although the number of viewers each content creator has varies from person to person, one thing they have in common is that they are all able to earn profit from their videos. In the nineties, content creators earned their income from subscription fees (Senft 2008, 19–21). However, as free content became more and more accessible, less people were willing to pay for these subscription fees (Senft 2008, 20). Nowadays content creators earn money on YouTube through advertisements. By connecting their YouTube account to Google's AdSense program, content creators can earn money by adding advertisements to the videos while still providing free content (Snickars and Vonderau 2009, 375). Furthermore, content creators can apply for the YouTube Partner Program in order to get "paid for the amount of views, subscriptions and high ratings their videos receive" (Simonsen 2011, 78; 'YouTube Partner Program Overview & Eligibility' n.d.). Another way to earn money is by getting paid sponsors. Brands pay content creators to promote their products. There are even companies dedicated to connecting brands and content creators (Woods 2016, 12). Before YouTube, broadcast jockeys earned money on the platform AfreecaTV. Viewers can gift the broadcast jockey virtual "star balloons" while the video is streaming. The minimum amount a viewer can buy is ten balloons with each star balloon being worth \$0.10 ('AfreecaTV Star Balloons' n.d.). With a simple click of the mouse, viewers can donate money to broadcast jockeys while watching the broadcast. The most popular broadcast jockeys can make a living out of streaming on AfreecaTV as they earn around €7500 a month (Hu 2015). However, after a controversy between the platform and one of the popular broadcast jockeys, many broadcast jockeys left AfreecaTV. Some of these broadcast jockeys have moved to YouTube (Chung 2016). One of the differences between

mökpang on AfreecaTV and YouTube is that while it is possible to live stream videos on YouTube, most of the mökpang videos there are pre-recorded.

This section introduced how YouTube assist people in their micro-celebrity practise by providing them with the affordances to upload content, connect with viewers, and earn money without making their viewers pay. In section 3.4, these technical affordances are discussed more thoroughly.

3.3 Let's Play

One of the most popular type of videos upcoming content creators turn to in their pursuit of a micro-celebrity life are Let's Play videos (Carpenter 2015). Topic-wise, Let's Plays and mökpang are completely different; however, they are quite similar in that they are both a genre consisting of videos of mundane activities that attracts many viewers. Before trying to find the underlying pattern in these videos, I first need to discuss Let's Play videos to create a better understanding of the concept.

Let's Play videos "show captured gameplay sessions, the primary entertainment coming from the added, often humorous commentary by the player through audio or a picture-in-picture frame showing the player in action" (Glas 2015, 81). There are numerous channels dedicated to Let's Plays on YouTube and the popularity of the genre led to a whole section on the platform dedicated to gaming ('Gaming' n.d.). There are several ways to create such a video, but every Let's Play video shows video game footage (Burwell and Miller 2016, 110). In some cases, it also includes footage of the gamer playing the game. The editing varies from person to person. Let's Plays that only show game footage are what I call a 'raw' Let's Play. Like raw footage, the Let's Play involves no editing whatsoever. The focus is solely on the game. Other Let's Plays include some form of editing. The editing can be simple, such as adding annotations, or the editing can be plentiful by adding in special effects, other clips, or sound effects. In this type of Let's Play, the gamer is just as important as the game itself (Burwell and Miller 2016,

113). Because of the distinct individual approach to the game, Let's Plays appeal to a large audience. It also led to the creation of a new fandom culture (Burwell and Miller 2016, 118). Some viewers are more interested in the gamer than the game itself. The main reason why these viewers watch Let's Plays is because they are attracted to the gamer's personality and style. This is confirmed by sociologist T.L. Taylor who says that "the distinctive qualities that specific streamers bring to their shows highlight the fact that it is not simply the game that is the draw to a broadcast" (2018, 80–81). Television producers recognize this potential and try to get Let's Players to appear on their shows. Television network Disney attempted to draw in more viewers by airing a television show called *Player Select* that consists of Let's Play videos from YouTube (Disney n.d.). This leads me to the conclusion that entertaining personalities is one of the underlying links between popular content. Where food television has celebrity chefs, such as Emeril Lagasse, Let's Play have popular Let's Players, such as PewDiePie, and mök pang have popular broadcast jockeys, such as Banzz.

Another link between Let's Play and mök pang is the crossover between genres. One of them involving PewDiePie. Being no stranger to the internet Pewdiepie caught on to the mök pang trend and created his own mök pang video (PewDiePie 2018). Viewers who originally watch Pewdiepie for his Let's Play videos are now also exposed to the mök pang genre. Combined with the later discussed technical affordances of YouTube, specifically the content affordances, YouTube might recommend the viewers who watched Pewdiepie's mök pang video more videos from the mök pang genre. Besides being a trending genre, mök pang might appeal to Let's Players because of the challenges that can be a part of it. Certain mök pang videos are more focused on challenges, such as finishing a meal within a specific time frame or eating a spicy dish. I argue that this is a gamified version of regular mök pang and therefore might appeal to those interested in Let's Play.

Besides entertainment, Let's Plays offer data for academic research. The genre should therefore be considered as a new research field according to media scholars Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler (2014, 8). They say that the different perspectives used to study the field of games, such as in psychological research, educational research, and theological research, fail to “maintain the cultural, theological and social aspects of game content and still take the performative aspects and ludic interaction into account” (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014, 8). To take all those aspects into account, a researcher needs to study the game and gaming environment, or as the authors call it, the *gameenvironment* (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014, 14). Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler name Let's Plays as an example of gameenvironments that allow gamers to share their gaming experience and viewers to express their opinions (2015, 106). The concept of gameenvironments is based on the actor-centred approach and consists of two levels. The first level is that of the technical environment of video games and gamers. In this level the focus is mainly on the game itself. It includes analysing textual and audio-visual narratives, the game's affordances, the production process, gamer's experiences and gamer-generated content (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014, 14). The second level is that of the cultural environments of video games and gaming. Games and gaming have become a big part of our culture, but culture has also influenced games and our way of gaming. This level lays the foundation for a comparative approach and raises questions, such as whether there are differences in gamer-generated content in different cultures (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014, 14–15). As discussed in the introduction, the few articles on mök pang also lack in taking several aspects in account. In this thesis, I attempt to consider multiple aspects of mök pang by following the steps of Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler's research. Like Let's Play, the environment of mök pang (mök vironment?) can also be divided in the same two levels, albeit altered to suit the mök pang subject. The first level consisting of the technical environment of mök pang is discussed during the contextual analysis in chapter

four, whereas the second level, the cultural environment is discussed in this theoretical framework, mainly in section 3.1.

It should now be clear that *mökpang* and Let's Play have more in common than one might think. Both started as niche but are now well-established genres. Both include a person performing mundane activities on camera. Not only does the content have the ability to attract viewers, but the content creators themselves can be the reason for their number of views. Both genres brought forth several micro-celebrities who can work fulltime as content creator. Having discussed food in the media, *mökpang*, microcelebrity, and Let's Play, the next section concentrates on the platform where all these concepts can be found—YouTube.

3.4 YouTube and Its Affordances

According to the website's own statistics, YouTube has over one billion users, meaning that a third of the people on internet has actively used the online video platform ('YouTube for Press' n.d.). In the beginning of YouTube, there were only a handful of people uploading their videos, but now users are discussing on forums whether YouTube is oversaturated (Genericyoutuber 2015; Joedub1421 2015; Nguyen 2018; Pierce 2016; Pramu22 2016). Some users say that becoming a content creator is useless as too many people are uploading videos. It is true that a great number of videos is uploaded as YouTube's statistics show that at least 500 hours of video is uploaded every minute (Jhonsa 2018). However, other users say that YouTube has always been in a state of "oversaturation" as the number of content creators and videos rise each year. These users claim that oversaturation is an excuse for content creators that do not achieve the success they want, because they are either not creative enough or do not put in enough effort (Genericyoutuber 2015; Joedub1421 2015). This demonstrates the importance of having an entertaining personality, as I discussed in the section on micro-celebrity. It is one of the reasons why amidst a large number of videos within a genre like *mökpang* and Let's Play, certain content creators succeed in becoming a micro-celebrity.

The videos of these micro-celebrities are often featured on the homepage of YouTube. The online platform provides its users with lists of “most popular” videos, which is based on the amount of views a video has. Computer scientists Chatzopoulou et al. question whether the amount of views is the only way to determine a video’s popularity and whether the popularity can also be based on the active feedback from viewers. YouTube gives viewers the option to rate a video by giving it a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down. There is also an option for users to interact with each other and express their opinion in the comments section. According to Chatzopoulou et al. there is a strong correlation between the amount of views a video has and the amount of likes, dislikes, and comments (Chatzopoulou, Sheng, and Faloutsos 2010, 4). While the ‘most popular’ list only focuses on number of views, “trending” playlist is formed with YouTube’s algorithm that uses the meta data of videos, which can help smaller content creators get discovered (‘Search and Discovery on YouTube’ n.d.). Although my research does not examine the details of the comments from the viewers as that would divert too much from the main focus, which are the affordances of YouTube, it is good to keep in mind that trending videos are not based on view count alone, but are also influenced by the other meta data and therefore also feature less known content creators.

Information systems researchers Sheila O’Riordan, Joseph Fuller, and Tadhg Nagle examined the affordances of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to better understand the potential uses and future of social network sites. These three platforms were chosen because they are the most used social network sites. Yet these sites are quite different from each other due to the different type of user base and intended purposes (2012, 4). While their research on the affordances on Facebook and Twitter are not relevant for this thesis, their analysis on YouTube affordances guides my case study on Banzz’s mökpang videos. O’Riordan et al. differentiate between two types of affordances: social affordances and content affordances (2012, 4). As the names suggest, social affordances are affordances that allow users to socialize with each other,

and the content affordances allow users to discover, share and manage content. O’Riordan et al. divided social affordances in three categories: social connectivity, social interactivity, and profile management (2012, 4). Social connectivity affords the link between two platform users. The connection between two users can be bidirectional and unidirectional. YouTube’s main link between users is the unidirectional social connectivity. Users can subscribe to channels to stay connected to a certain content creator. Having a large number of subscribers is the goal of most content creators as it comes with several benefits, such as receiving the YouTube Creator Award (‘Benefits and Awards’ n.d.). The social interactivity affordances on YouTube consists out of asynchronous and synchronous communication, giving videos a thumbs up or thumbs down, and sharing the video externally. Especially asynchronous communication in the form of the commenting is used by plenty of users. Another form of asynchronous communication is posting in the community tab on the channels of users. The final category of social affordances are the profile management affordances. YouTube channels feature profile icons and profile art that are managed by the account owners. Besides social affordances, O’Riordan et al. also distinguished content affordances. The relevant affordances are divided into content discovery, content sharing, and content aggregation (Sheila O’Riordan, Joseph Feller, and Tadhg Nagle 2012, 5). Since YouTube is a video sharing platform, it is self-evident that these affordances are of bigger importance than the social affordances (Sheila O’Riordan, Joseph Feller, and Tadhg Nagle 2012, 9). Especially content discovery and content sharing play a big role on the platform. YouTube’s recommendation system makes it simple for users to discover content that will interest them. On the homepage of YouTube, one can immediately see videos that are currently trending on the platform and recommended videos based on previously watched videos. When it comes to content aggregation, YouTube has various collections of videos in the form of playlists, recommendations, trends, and topics. The results from

O’Riordan et al.’s study is that the focus of YouTube is still content rather than social networking.

This might explain why a cultural niche like mök pang has been able to outgrow its niche market. YouTube provides users with affordances to discover new content, add them in a video collection, and share them with others either on YouTube or on other platforms. Earlier Radde-Antweiler et al. stated that Let’s Plays should be examined on the levels of a technical and cultural environment. In their other article, they created a step-by-step guide to analyse Let’s Plays through a context analysis, which includes a matrix and inevitably also includes the affordances of YouTube. Chapter four follows these steps to analyse mök pang videos “to get a grounded overview and a deeper insight into important basic information” (Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler 2015, 104) and provides more detail on how Banzz uses these technical affordances.

4. Case Study: Bazz

In order to understand the role of the affordances of YouTube in relation to mökpang, I examine two mökpang videos through a Let's Play lens by applying the methods of studies done on Let's Play to videos from Bazz as he is one of the most famous mökpang broadcast jockeys (Jinhai Park 2018). Bazz, whose real name is Chöng Mansu, has such a huge following that he is regarded as a celebrity in South Korea. He started his mökpang journey on AfreecaTV and is one of the broadcast jockeys who left the Korean streaming platform, but he said it was not because of the controversy. He realised that if he wanted to reach an international audience and gain more viewers, he would have to switch to an international platform. Thus, he left AfreecaTV in favour of YouTube (Chung 2016). In this chapter more is discussed about Bazz as well as my methodology, descriptions of the two chosen videos, and the context analysis of these videos.

4.1 Methodology

Two studies that are being used as guideline are the context analysis by Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler (2015), and the affordance analysis by O'Riordan et al (2012). The context analysis requires certain statistics about Bazz's YouTube channel. To collect them, I use the YouTube Data API to extract the statistics, which can be found in figure 1 in the appendix. It is important to keep in mind that data on YouTube changes frequently, thus the numbers presented in this thesis are snapshots from the data received on 30 April 2020. The settings of YouTube also influence the way videos are perceived by its users, which is discussed later in this chapter. For this case study, my YouTube settings are: PC, operating system Windows 10, Chrome 83.0.4103.97, language setting: British English, country setting: The Netherlands, non-restricted mode.

Unlike Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler who only analysed one video, I analyse two videos for the context analysis. Analysing a small number of videos allows my research to be focused

on quality rather than quantity yet provide enough data to discover connections between literature and the videos. Since my focus in this case study is on the usage of YouTube's affordances, I chose to analyse the oldest and newest video of Bazz. This is to examine whether the way he uses YouTube has changed, and if so, what the reason for these changes could be. I sorted the videos on Bazz's channel by selecting the 'Date added (oldest)' filter and then proceeded to select the oldest video that includes subtitles. Since Bazz only speaks Korean, which not everyone, including me, can fully understand, the availability of English is important. Fortunately, YouTube indicates the availability of subtitles with a small tag under the videos. The same procedure is done when selecting the most recent video, except that the videos are sorted with the 'Date added (newest)' filter. The oldest video is referred to as video A and the newest video is referred to as video B.

Both videos are analysed by following the steps Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler took when they examined a Let's Play video by PewDiePie (2015, 104–5). Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler call a context analysis “the first and equal part of any analytical work. Consequently, it is a structured, step by step procedure providing answers to specified and clearly defined components” (2015, 102). They divide the video in three levels: the game, the gamer, and the comments, because they “need to be distinguished when researching Let's Plays” (Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler 2015, 104). Each level is then subjected to six *wh-questions*. The six *wh-questions* are: who, what, when, where, why, and how (Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler 2015, 103). The different levels and questions are brought together in a matrix. According Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler, their matrix is the initial step to analysing Let's Plays and therefore I also created a matrix that serves as the initial step to analysing mök pang. While Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler divided their video into three levels, I divide mök pang into two levels: the mök pang video itself and the broadcast jockey. The level of comments is left out in this thesis, because the contextualisation of comments is irrelevant for my research question. It

might, however, be an interesting subject to focus on in future research. The edited matrix for the context analysis of mök pang is listed as table 1 in the appendix. All videos are created by Bazz and are found on YouTube, thus instead of analysing the same components twice, the components of platform, channel, and broadcast jockey are only analysed once. All other components differ per video and therefore each video requires a separate analysis.

After providing details on mök pang and mapping the contextual situation, I move on to the affordance analysis. Instead of conducting my own affordance analysis on YouTube, I use the inventory of affordances composed by O’Riordan et al. (2012, 8–10) They divide the affordances of YouTube into two categories: social affordances and content affordances. Because their research is conducted in 2012, some of the affordances of YouTube have changed. When comparing the affordances of 2012 and of 2019, it is noticeable that YouTube shifted their focus to content creators by adding new features, such as creator academy. Besides the creators, YouTube focuses on creating a stronger bond between content creators and their viewers by providing a ‘community’ tab on the channel of the creators. Recently YouTube also rolled out a new feature where viewers can become a member of a channel to gain access to exclusive perks. Content creators benefit from this as the members need to pay a monthly membership fee, which generates revenue for the content creators. I edited the inventory of O’Riordan et al. to include the changes, such as the channel membership feature. This inventory can be found as table 2 and table 3 in the appendix. With the updated inventory of YouTube affordances, I examine and discuss how Bazz uses these affordances to grow his channel on YouTube. While this research has been going on for several years, all data for the analysis was collected on 30 April 2020.

4.2 The Selected Videos

In the following section, a short textual analysis of the two selected videos is presented. The analysis provides content to the context analysis that is discussed in section

4.3. This gives the reader a better understanding of the statistics from the context analysis without having to watch the videos.

4.2.1 Video A: Oldest Video

The oldest video with English subtitles on Banzz his channel is from six years ago (Banzz 2014). While it has English subtitles, the title itself is in Korean. Freely translated the title would be “**【Mökpang】 Fire Chicken Noodles Steamed Dumplings Mökpang 140622.**”

Before watching the content, the viewer can already expect a few things from the video because of the provided information. First, those who understand Korean know from the title that this mökpang includes steamed dumplings and fire chicken noodles. Especially the latter attracts attention as this is a specific type of noodles that has gained a lot of popularity due to its high level of spiciness. Another piece of information is the number 140622 in the title, which represents the date of recording, 22 July 2014.

The video starts with Banzz explaining to the camera what he is going to eat. He is sitting in his bedroom in front of a pot boiling water, five packages of fire chicken noodles, a large plate of steamed dumplings, and a plastic container filled with pickled radish. The viewer has a clear view of the rest of his bedroom, which is full of personal materials, such as clothes, cables, and photos. While still explaining, he prepares his food and starts eating an apple that was placed off screen. He also looks off screen several times and seems to be distracted. Suddenly, he excuses himself as he gets up. The viewer can hear him talking to someone else, discovering that the other person is vacuuming. After returning, he reads on what is most likely his computer screen. He then thanks an internet user who just subscribed to his fan club. Throughout his video, he thanks several people for either subscribing to his fan club or for sending him star balloons, which indicates that this video was a live recording. The AfreecaTV logo in the top left of the screen and the mention of star balloons confirms that this was live streamed on AfreecaTV and later reuploaded to YouTube. In the meantime,

Banzz talks the viewers through his preparation process. After a few minutes, the subtitles have disappeared, although Banzz is still talking. Halfway through the video, his camera freezes for a few seconds. He reacts flustered about the situation and shows the viewers that all the noodles are still there and he is not trying to fool anyone (by removing some of the food). He starts eating and expresses how spicy the noodles are. Besides thanking viewers that either subscribe or donate money to him, and responding to their comments, he shares the live chat room on his screen when a certain number of donations has been reached. Sometimes he makes a few mistakes while doing this, for example by sharing his web browser. After finishing his meal, he announces that he will end the broadcast. His final remark is that the dumplings were tasty after which the video ends immediately.

4.2.2 Video B: Newest Video

The most recent video with English subtitles on Banzz his channel is called “**ASMR** Cup Noodle Mukbang by [Someone NEVER Feel HOT] (EATING SOUND NO TALKING MUKBANG). (Banzz 2020)” The title includes the word “ASMR”, a concept which I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. It is short for autonomous sensory meridian response and is described as a tingling sensation. This sensation can be triggered by auditory and visual stimuli. He further emphasizes it with the following text in his title “EATING SOUND NO TALKING MUKBANG.” Another piece of information from the title is that Banzz will be eating cup noodles and that he does not feel any heat (from food).

The first few seconds of the video start with a black screen with the message “Turn on CC,” referring to the availability of closed captions. The screen then changes to Banzz sitting in a room with in front of him cup noodles on top of a cutting board. He bows towards the camera and the closed captions appear. Instead of communicating with the viewer verbally, he uses the closed captions to share his thoughts. He prepares the cup noodles, but not the entire process is included in the video. This is because the video is not a recorded live stream,

but an edited pre-recorded video. Immediately after preparation he starts eating the noodles. Halfway through the video, he mentions that he is not holding the noodles up for a long time to cool it down. Throughout the video, he shares his thoughts about the noodles and his current state, such as feeling sleepy or having a sore throat. When he finishes the noodles, he shows the empty cup and bows to the camera to say goodbye to the viewers. The screen cuts to a black screen, which shows the credits and suggestions to his other videos.

4.3 Bazz's Usage of YouTube's Affordances

Both video A and B have been published on YouTube, or more specifically, the YouTube channel created by Bazz. Following the matrix of Radde-Antweiler and Zeiler, I examined Bazz's YouTube channel. His channel is verified by YouTube, which means the channel is authentic and complete. For a channel to be complete it "must be public and have a channel banner, description, channel icon, and content, and be active on YouTube" ('Verification Badges on Channels' n.d.). Bazz uses profile management affordances to show his unique logo and promote his other social media accounts. On his channel homepage, viewers can also see his recent videos, playlists, and other YouTube channels. Other than that, his profile does not have much of an impact on his channel growth and thus the growth of mök pang. As O'Riordan et al. concluded, the profile of an individual is not that important on YouTube. Instead, the emphasis lies on user-generated content (2012, 9).

The "HOME" tab on Bazz's channel shows that he has created multiple playlists and other channels for videos of different categories. Bazz uses the content aggregation affordance of YouTube by sorting his videos in playlists. If a user clicks on one of his videos in the playlist, YouTube will automatically play every video until the end of the list. Another form of aggregation is done by the platform itself rather than Bazz. If a person watches one mök pang video, YouTube will automatically recommend other mök pang videos. Since the platform aggregates trending genres and videos, mök pang videos can be featured on

YouTube's homepage. Thus, even when a person has not viewed a mök pang video before, there is still a chance the user will encounter it.

While aggregating his content, Banzz created seven different playlists based on its genre. Currently, his largest playlist is the “**【ASMR】**” playlist and contains videos with a duration ranging from a minute to forty minutes. The title of the playlist indicates that all videos in this list are focused on ASMR. Similar to Let's Play and mök pang, the ASMR genre has evolved from a niche to a global phenomenon (Andersen 2015, 687). Most of its content creators try to trigger this response by recording themselves whispering or eating, but any type of content will do as long as the creators have a decent microphone. The ASMR playlist contains the most videos, albeit a rather recent topic for Banzz. Performing an analysis using the YouTube API showed that the ASMR playlist was published on 12 September 2016 and its first video was only released a few days later. To compare, video A was published two years earlier. The large number of ASMR videos Banzz produced including his most recent video indicates that he is aware of trends on YouTube and is trying to attract more viewers by merging this genre of videos with his mök pang videos. This merging of genres widens the appeal of mök pang videos by attracting people who are initially more interested in ASMR than mök pang.

Although Banzz recently shifted his focus to ASMR videos, he is still mainly known for his mök pang content. Looking at his playlists, he actually has two playlists dedicated to mök pang. Together these playlists contain more videos than his ASMR playlist, but he decided to split them up depending on the year in which the mök pang video was published. For example, video A is included in his “**【먹방 2013-2018】**” playlist. All the videos in this playlist are mök pang videos from the period 2013 to 2018 and have a duration ranging from three minutes to over three hours. Since I deliberately chose to examine the oldest video and the most recent video, there are several years between their publication date. Video A was

published on 22 June 2014, whereas video B was published on 10 January 2020. Besides the published date, there are other characteristics that imply that the videos are a few years apart. Video A has a square ratio and the maximum quality is only 480 pixels. Furthermore, video A's description contains links to several of Banzz's playlists, but none of them exist anymore. From the AfreecaTV logo and the remarks that Banzz made, it is clear that video A was originally a live broadcast on AfreecaTV and later uploaded to YouTube. There are no clear signs that this video was edited. He did not cut out any of the mistakes he made while recording the video. Video B, on the other hand, showed clear signs of being edited, such as the text on screen with the suggestion to turn on the closed captions and certain parts of his video being cut out. Other technological advances resulted in video B having a wide screen ratio and a maximum quality of 1080 pixels. The growing success of Banzz is noticeable in his most recent video description. He now has a copyright notice to warn his viewers that commercial use of his videos will be penalized. Another big difference between video A and video B is their duration. Whereas Banzz used to do live broadcast that could last several hours, which were then uploaded to YouTube, his videos now are no longer than 15 minutes. Since our era is known as an information-rich world, content creators often resort to short videos to not lose any potential viewers (Welbourne and Grant 2016, 709).

Another way content creators can draw in more views is by promoting their content. One of the ways Banzz does this is by thanking his current viewers and encouraging to subscribe to his channel. He does this in his videos, but also in his video descriptions as can be seen in the matrix in table 4. He also added links to his social media to encourage viewers to stay connected to him. At the same time, he promotes his YouTube account on other social media to increase the possibility of people subscribing his channel. Banzz is also one of the few who have a channel membership available. This type of social connectivity affordance enables his viewers to become a member of his channel through monthly payments. Channel

members have access to certain benefits, such as exclusive videos, emojis, and badges. Bazz receives 70% of the membership revenue ('Channel Memberships FAQs' n.d.). This turn of events is interesting, since almost a decade ago Senft discovered that free content cause people to no longer be willing to pay for subscriptions (2008, 20). Although YouTube continues developing social connectivity affordances, they are not essential for the platform. People can access most of the content on the platform by simply visiting the website or app.

Yet these social affordances can be a great way for content creators to expand their audience. Bazz uses the social interactivity affordances on YouTube in the form of asynchronous communication by posting in the community tab of his channel. There are more comments on his videos than on his community posts, but the comments on the videos often only consist of opinions about the video, whereas the comments in his community tab are more a direct interaction with Bazz. External interactions, in this case sharing content across platforms, is one of the affordances that can cause channels to grow exponentially. Instead of having to go to YouTube, people can come across Bazz's video just by browsing other social media. This increases the exposure of mökpang as people will be able to see mökpang videos without explicitly looking for them.

Since most of Bazz's videos are about mökpang, video A and video B are nothing out of the ordinary for Bazz. He also has a separate channel dedicated to ASMR mökpang videos. However, Bazz also tries to connect with his views by creating more personal content. Videos that divert from mökpang are in his daily life playlist. This playlist contains travel videos or personal videos. Additionally, he has a channel specifically for vlogs about his personal life. On his main channel, there is a featured channel run by his friend. This is a fitness channel that contains work out videos in which some of them Bazz is present. Besides YouTube videos, Bazz tries to connect with his fans on other social media. In the 'Community' category of his channel, Bazz announced that he opened a *fan cafe* on a

website called Naver.³ Fan cafes are created by users to form their own online communities for people interested in a specific person or group. It is an clear form of fan management that Marwick uses to describe micro-celebrities (2015, 6). Because these cafes are only available in Korean, they are not easily accessible for Banzz's international audience. It is easier for them to follow him on Instagram or his Facebook account. The link to his Instagram profile can be found on his YouTube channel. The profile description on his Instagram account clearly shows a more personal side as it includes his real name and his date of birth. Unlike his main YouTube channel, which is dedicated to mökpong, his Instagram account focuses on his personal life. His Instagram posts have no specific theme and include travel content, mökpong content, daily life content, and fitness content. Just like his Instagram account, the content of his Facebook profile is not focused on mökpong but shows different aspects of his life. This behaviour is in accordance with how Senft describes micro-celebrities "amping up" their internet persona (2008, 25). He did not promote this account on his YouTube channel, but several of his older videos contain a link to his account in the description. Compared to his other media accounts where he used to post nearly every day, he is not active on Facebook. He only posted three times over a span of two years. His last activity was on 1 February 2020 when he wrote a public apology regarding the advertisement controversy of his company Eat4U in the summer of 2019. His company also has its own website and Instagram account, but is solely focused on the company's products, which are health products. It is significantly less popular with his viewers, most likely because it contains no personal content nor mökpong content. However, the controversy may also have influenced the company's popularity.

³ Naver is the South Korean equivalent to Google. It started out as a search engine, but has added a variety of services over the years

Before the controversy, Korean daily newspaper JoongAng Ilbo, considered Banzz as the first and most popular person in the mökpang niche (Kim Eun Bi 2017). He also received multiple awards from Korean streaming platform AfreecaTV ('Banzz' n.d.). His presence in the conventional celebrity scene grew after starring on a Korean TV show called "LAN Cable Life" (Im Eun-byel 2018). The goal of this show is to attract a younger audience to the television medium by inviting guests that attract a large number of viewers online. Banzz himself never spoke about his celebrity status. However, after the controversy he changed the description in the 'ABOUT' tab of his YouTube channel to "I will try to be remembered as a good person." The controversy started when he shared advertisements on his health product on social media. According to prosecutors, his advertisement misled customers into thinking his products will result in weight loss. They claim he violated the South Korean food laws and therefore should receive a six-month jail term. Banzz pleaded innocence, but the judges found him guilty and charged him with a five million won (3785 euro) fine (Kim A-rin 2019). The whole process negatively impacted Banzz mökpang career as it resulted in a major backlash from the South Korean society and a loss of thousands of subscribers. This backlash is visible when comparing the likes and dislikes between video A and video B. Video A was published years before the controversy and has ten times more likes than dislikes. Video B, on the other hand, was published after the controversy and has seven times more dislikes than likes. The change in his YouTube description also shows that the backlash had an impact on his personal life as well. Other than the public apologies on his YouTube channel and Facebook account, he stopped uploading new content.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I tried to answer the question how we can understand the mök pang phenomenon by examining a broadcast jockey's usage of YouTube's affordances through a Let's Play lens. I examined mök pang through a Let's Play lens by using a context analysis matrix from an existing study done on Let's Play. The broadcast jockey I chose to examine is South Korea's most popular broadcast jockey known by the name Banzz. To have a better understanding on how Banzz uses YouTube's affordances, I decided to analyse his oldest and newest video to see if it has changed over time. The statistics of the analysis can be found in the appendix.

Before analysing the videos, I examined the academic context mök pang is situated in. It soon became clear that the academic research on this subject was scarce. The academic literature that was available came from a socio-cultural approach and neglected the platform where mök pang can be found (S. Hong and Pak 2016; Mun, Sim, and Pak 2017; Schwegler-Castañer 2018). Because of the lack of academic research on mök pang, I created my theoretical framework with literature about food studies, Let's Play, micro-celebrities, and the affordances of YouTube (Adema 2000; Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe, and Zeiler 2014; Burwell and Miller 2016; Senft 2008; Wesch 2009; Alice Marwick 2013; Sheila O'Riordan, Joseph Feller, and Tadhg Nagle 2012). I then examined the affordances of YouTube and hypothesized that affordances cause a niche to grow into a full-blown genre.

After examining the way Banzz uses YouTube's affordances by performing a context analysis on two of his videos, I found that Banzz used the content affordances more actively in video B, his latest video, than in video A, his oldest video. For video A, he only used the social affordances by encouraging viewers to subscribe to his channel and visit his other social media accounts. Although video A was simply uploaded to YouTube without editing and high-quality footage, it almost has 10 million views. One of the reasons for the large number of viewers is

vicarious pleasure, or vicarious consumption, as Adema calls it (2000, 119). Food primarily used to be an item needed by humans to survive; however, an increasing number of people have an abundance of food. This combination of abundance, developed technology, and leisure time led to people using food for entertainment. We like to see it on TV, we like to take pictures of our meal, and now we like to watch other people eat. The content affordances on YouTube made it possible for *mökpang* to go from a phenomenon created to tackle Korean cultural problems to a global form of entertainment.

Comparing food television to *mökpang* shows striking similarities. They are parallel. The only difference is that food television is conventional media and *mökpang* is a part of new media. Based on Adema's work, the similarities include confirmation of a people's obsession with food (2000, 114), focus on entertainment rather than nutritional value of food (2000, 114), personalities to appeal to the public (2000, 115–17), reduced value of food as cultural capital (2000, 117), vicarious experience of new types of food (2000, 114; 2000, 118–19), and a sense of being together (2000, 118). The practice of micro-celebrity in the *mökpang* genre is evident through the focus on the connection between viewers and content creators (Wesch 2009, 27; A. Marwick 2015, 6; Senft 2008, 25), and the monetization of videos (Snickars and Vonderau 2009, 375; Simonsen 2011, 78).

Several researchers within the fields of food entertainment, YouTube, and Let's Play all pointed out that it is not just the content that attracts viewers, but the personality of the content creator as well (Adema 2000, 115–17; Burwell and Miller 2016, 113; Wesch 2009, 27). Viewers might be attracted to certain content, but it is the personality that makes the viewers stick around. People want to be entertained by a certain individual, which led to the rise of micro-celebrities in several genres on YouTube. Not all people follow a Let's Play channel because they like the game. They follow a channel because they like how the Let's Player acts and reacts, and how he/she approaches the game. My analysis showed the same results for the

mökpang genre. There are several mökpang channels on YouTube, yet Bazz was the most popular one. He became successful because he shows his personality in his mökpang videos. Furthermore, his other social media accounts have content other than mökpang. Instead, on these accounts he publishes content about his daily life. This type of content helps building an intimate bond between Bazz and his viewers—a deep connection—without the social responsibilities that come with it—a loose connection as Wesch would put it (2009, 27). I believe that besides being an important part of new media practises, micro-celebrities form implications for conventional media. Micro-celebrities are more appealing to the younger audience who rather spend time watching YouTube than TV. Because of the connection between micro-celebrities and their audience, conventional media, such as TV, use micro-celebrities as a part of a strategy to boost viewer ratings.

Although having many fans is always a plus on social media, it is not essential on YouTube. Afterall, YouTube is and remains a video-sharing platform. O’Riordan et al. made clear with the help of an affordance analysis that the focus of YouTube lies on their content affordances (2012, 8–10). The viewers who watch Bazz are able to expand their mökpang appetite with the recommended videos feature on YouTube, whereas those who do not know of mökpang are likely to run into it at some point due to YouTube’s trending feature. Even people on other social media can come across mökpang because YouTube has a feature that makes it very simple for people to share videos on other platforms. As stated by O’Riordan et al. “often the content comes to the user, as opposed to users searching specifically” (2012, 7). Viewers can search for mökpang, but mökpang can find viewers as well.

I conclude that by examining how Bazz uses YouTube’s affordances, YouTube effectively helped mökpang break free from its cultural boundaries and turned it into a global phenomenon. With the help of the content discovery affordances of YouTube, people from all-over the world can watch mökpang and become broadcast jockeys. It no longer is a niche

that only appeals to South Koreans who are lonely and want to ‘share’ a meal, or who use vicarious consumption to cope with the high beauty standards. Instead content creators who want to gain views are likely to jump on the mǒkpang bandwagon. Especially on a platform where using the right keywords can help you get discovered through the content affordances.

The implications mǒkpang has on other online phenomena is that it leads to a big melting pot of trending genres. Mǒkpang can be gamified into mǒkpang challenges. Or it can be combined with ASMR and attract a whole different kind of audience. Micro-influencers of completely different genres are willing to dabble into mǒkpang and consequently introduce their fans to the phenomenon. It also has implications for food television. Food television has evolved over time. It started as cooking shows. Then the importance of the personality was introduced, which led to TV personalities. Technological advances brought food television online. Mǒkpang shifted the focus of cooking shows to eating shows. Perhaps the next step will come with further technological advancement. For example, instead of eating together separated by screens, we will be able to eat next to each other through virtual reality.

This thesis approached mǒkpang from a new media perspective by focusing on the technical affordances of YouTube, but there is still a lot of undiscovered territory in mǒkpang that could be covered by future research. For example, one could put more focus on the viewers of mǒkpang or on the shock value that comes with the enormous amount of food some broadcast jockeys eat on a regular basis. The ASMR genre where audio is more important than the visual content, which can be combined with mǒkpang, is another possible research topic. This thesis only scratched the surface of mǒkpang, but hopefully it provided enough inspiration for other academics to pick up on this interesting phenomenon.

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7. Appendix

Mökpang		
Context Analysis	<i>Mökpang</i>	a) Platform
		b) Channel
		c) Playlist
		d) Video
		Time period
		Topics
		Statistics
	<i>Broadcast Jockey</i>	Person
		Network
Media repertoire		

Table 1 Matrix for Context Analysis of Mökpang

Affordances	YouTube
Social Connectivity	
Connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add Friend - Subscribe - Join Channel Membership
Connection Search/Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Featured Channels - Search Channels
Social Interactivity	
Asynchronous Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Posts/Channel Comment - Video Posts - Video Comment - On-site Messaging System
Synchronous Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Live Chat
Rating/Liking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Like/Dislike - Add to (Favourite) Playlist
External Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share/Embed Content
Profile Management	
Manage/Edit Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Channels - Channel Icon - Channel Art - Channel Description - Location - Insight - Subscriptions
Profile Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email Notifications
Location Tagging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video Location
External Profile Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embed/Share Content - Facebook/Twitter
Mobile Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobile Application

Table 2 Updated Social Affordances System Inventory and Categorisation

Affordances	YouTube
Content Discovery	
Interaction/Community Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annotations - Community Posts
Content Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search - Browse
Social Awareness Streams (SAS)/ Content Feed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trending/Breaking News - Browse/Category/Topics - Recommended Channels/Videos - Subscriptions - YouTube Mixes (Playlists)
External Sources of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen Tube - Creators' Corner Blog - YouTube Facebook/Twitter - YouTube Music - Creator Blog - Creator Academy
Content Sharing	
Interactions/Community Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annotations - Community Posts - Description - Favourite - Live-Streaming
External Sources of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share/Embed Content
Content Aggregation	
Aggregated Content/List via SAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annotations - Favourites/Playlists - Trending/Breaking News - Browse/Category/Topics - Recommended Channels/Videos - Subscriptions - YouTube Mixes (Playlists) - Gaming for You/Latest Videos - Sport Highlights
External Aggregation of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen Tube - YouTube Facebook/Twitter - YouTube Music

Table 3 Updated Content Affordances System Inventory and Categorisation

Try this API

Request parameters

part

categoryId

forUsername

hl

id

managedByMe

maxResults

mine

mySubscribers

onBehalfOfContentOwner

cURL
 HTTP
 JAVASCRIPT
 JAVA

```

GET https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/channels?part=snippet%2CcontentDetails%2Cstatistics&forUsername=eodyd188

Authorization: Bearer [YOUR_ACCESS_TOKEN]
Accept: application/json
            
```

application/json
 Raw HTTP Response

```

200
{
  "title": "밴쯔",
  "description": "좋은사람으로 기억에 남도록 노력하겠습니다.",
  "publishedAt": "2013-07-10T15:48:52.000Z",
  "thumbnails": {
    "default": {
      "url": "https://i.ytimg.com/vi/...",
      "width": 120,
      "height": 90
    },
    "medium": {
      "url": "https://i.ytimg.com/vi/...",
      "width": 320,
      "height": 180
    },
    "high": {
      "url": "https://i.ytimg.com/vi/...",
      "width": 480,
      "height": 360
    }
  },
  "localized": {
    "title": "밴쯔",
    "description": "좋은사람으로 기억에 남도록 노력하겠습니다."
  },
  "country": "KR"
},
  "contentDetails": {
    "videoId": "..."
  },
  "statistics": {
    "viewCount": "585992690",
    "commentCount": "0",
    "subscriberCount": "2460000",
    "hiddenSubscriberCount": false,
    "videoCount": "581"
  }
}
            
```

Figure 1 YouTube API analysis of Banzz's channel

Mökpang Context Analysis		
Mökpang	a) Platform	a) YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/eodyd188
	b) Channel	b) Title: 밴쯔 Description: "좋은사람으로 기억에 남도록 노력하겠습니다." [I will try to be remembered as a good person.] Country: South Korea Date of Publishing: 10 July 2013 Number of Playlists: 7 Number of Videos: 581 Verification: Yes Subscribers: 2,460,000 Viewers: 585,992,690 Featured Channels: 3
	c) Playlist 1	c) Title: 《먹방 2013-2018》 Description: none Date of Publishing: 09 December 2019 Last Updated: 15 December 2019 Number of Videos: 139 Number of Views: 61,955
Playlist 2	Title: 《ASMR》 Description: "자막(CC)기능을 켜주시면 한글,영어,일본어 자막을 보실 수 있습니다 'ㄱ'" [if you turn on the closed captions(CC) there are Korean, English, and Japanese subtitles 'ㄱ'] Date of Publishing: 12 September 2016 Last Updated: 10 January 2020 Number of Videos: 166 Number of Views: 412,909	

d) Video A	<p>d)</p> <p>Title: 《먹방》 불닭볶음면 찐만두 먹방 140622</p> <p>Playlist: 《먹방 2013-2018》</p> <p>Date of Publishing: 22 June 2014</p> <p>Duration: 28:07 minutes</p> <p>Views: 9,949,281</p> <p>Likes: 48,951</p> <p>Dislikes: 4,178</p> <p>The video description includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “설명항상 밴즈 채널을 찾아주셔서 감사합니다! 오늘도 맛있는 하루되세요 :)” [Thank you for always visiting Banzz channel! Have a nice day today :)] • Link to the subscription of his channel • Links to his other playlists that no longer exist • Link to his Instagram account
Video B	<p>Title: 《ASMR》 Cup Noodle Mukbang by [Someone NEVER Feel HOT] (EATING SOUND NO TALKING MUKBANG)</p> <p>Playlist: 《ASMR》</p> <p>Date of Publishing: 10 January 2020</p> <p>Duration: 4:24 minutes</p> <p>Views: 2,302,812</p> <p>Likes: 6,758</p> <p>Dislikes: 49,071</p> <p>The video description includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • " └ How to get notification of YouTube LIVE! If you hit the bell button next to 'Subscribe' button, you will get the notification of my YouTube LIVE! <p>Copyright of the video is possessed by CJ E&M DIA TV. You will be inflicted a penalty on the commercial use of the video. Please be sure to leave the reference when using this video as a non-commercial purposes."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to the subscription of his channel • Link to his Instagram account
Time period	<p>Channel: 10 July 2013</p> <p>First video: 25 November 2013</p> <p>《먹방 2013-2018》 playlist: 09 December 2019, last updated 15 December 2019</p> <p>《ASMR》 playlist: 12 September 2016, last updated 10 January 2020</p> <p>Video A: 22 June 2014</p> <p>Video B: 10 January 2020</p>

	Topics	Mökpang videos Travel videos Vlogs
	Statistics	Subscribers: 2,460,000 Viewers: 585,992,690
<i>Broadcast Jockey</i>	Person	Real name: Chöng Mansu Gender: male Date of birth: 15 September 1990 Ethnicity: South Korean
	Network	Featured channels: • Banzz's ASMR https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVFSrUkV0LTzi4bLICZ7SEw • Mansu's Daily Life https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYG-ZMCzmCzpA0nOz0WigiA • Jamiet https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrFFbADYO1jrXxefP9MivWA
	Media repertoire	Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/eodyd188 Online fancafe: https://cafe.naver.com/eodyd188 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/eodyd188 Twitch: https://www.twitch.tv/eodyd188 Company: http://www.eatforu.com

Table 4 Context Analysis of Mökpang