

Motivations Associated with ASMR Mukbang Obsession among Out-of-town University Students in Malang Using Uses Gratifications

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Abstract : The rapid growth of digital media has transformed information and entertainment consumption patterns, including the increasing popularity of Mukbang ASMR content on video-sharing platforms. Combining eating activities with Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), Mukbang ASMR provides an immersive audio-visual experience that attracts university students. Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study aims to identify the dominant motivations influencing students' consumption of Mukbang ASMR content. A quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design was employed among 430 university students living away from their hometowns in Malang City, Indonesia, who had watched Mukbang ASMR within the last six months. Data were collected through an online questionnaire measuring Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, and Companionship and Loneliness, and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that all dimensions significantly influence Mukbang ASMR viewing obsession, with Alienation and Novelty as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.296$; $p < 0.001$), followed by Vicarious Satisfaction and Companionship and Loneliness. These findings show that Mukbang ASMR consumption is driven by the need for new experiences, psychological escape, indirect satisfaction, and virtual companionship.

Keywords : Alienation and Novelty; Audience Motivation; Mukbang ASMR; University Students; Uses and Gratifications Theory

Abstrak : Perkembangan media digital telah mengubah pola konsumsi informasi dan hiburan, termasuk meningkatnya popularitas konten Mukbang ASMR pada platform berbagi video. Perpaduan aktivitas makan dan elemen Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) menciptakan pengalaman audio-visual yang menarik perhatian mahasiswa. Berdasarkan Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis motivasi mahasiswa dalam mengonsumsi konten Mukbang ASMR. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei deskriptif terhadap 430 mahasiswa perantau di Kota Malang, Indonesia, yang telah menonton Mukbang ASMR dalam enam bulan terakhir. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring yang mengukur tiga dimensi motivasi, yaitu Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, dan Companionship and Loneliness, kemudian dianalisis

menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh dimensi motivasi berpengaruh signifikan terhadap obsesi menonton Mukbang ASMR. Alienation and Novelty menjadi prediktor terkuat ($\beta = 0,296$; $p < 0,001$), diikuti Vicarious Satisfaction ($\beta = 0,284$; $p < 0,001$) dan Companionship and Loneliness ($\beta = 0,228$; $p < 0,001$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa konsumsi Mukbang ASMR dipengaruhi oleh kebutuhan akan pengalaman baru, pelarian psikologis, kepuasan tidak langsung, dan interaksi sosial virtual.

Kata Kunci : Alienation and Novelty; Motivasi Audiens; Mukbang ASMR; Mahasiswa; Teori Uses and Gratifications

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has transformed the way individuals access and consume information. The internet and video-based platforms allow users to access various types of content quickly, in a personalized manner, and without the constraints of time or space (Ha, 2022). Among the various available platforms, YouTube has become one of the most popular digital media platforms because it offers a wide variety of audiovisual content that meets users' needs for information, entertainment, and social interaction (Hidayat, 2021; Oktavia & Juhana, 2023). For college students, a group characterized by high levels of digital literacy and frequent internet use, YouTube serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a medium for gaining specific emotional and social experiences (Gunawan, Audrianto, & Wuisan, 2024; Jenging & Mohamad, 2022; Shahzalal, Adnan, & Abdullah, 2023; Wardah, 2021). This perspective aligns with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which views the audience as active participants who consciously choose specific media to fulfill their needs for information, entertainment, social experiences, and personal satisfaction (Katz & Blumler, 1973; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

One phenomenon that has rapidly gained popularity on YouTube in recent years is ASMR Mukbang (Chan, Ezwan, Tian, Azzman, & Tajuddin, 2025; Siminiuc, Turcanu, & Siminiuc, 2025). This content combines the act of eating large quantities of food or specific dishes (mukbang) with elements of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) that highlight the sounds of chewing, biting, and the texture of food in detail (Strand & Gustafsson, 2020; Wang, Wang, Yang, Li, & Fu, 2025). This combination of visual and audio elements creates an immersive experience that has captured the attention of millions of viewers across various countries (Jiang et al., 2024; Sanskriti, Guglani, Joshi, & Anjankar, 2023; Styawan & Buwana, 2023). Unlike conventional entertainment content, ASMR Mukbang offers a sensory experience that allows viewers to indirectly experience the sensation of eating while also deriving emotional comfort and relaxation (Sakurai et al., 2023; Tan, Shoenberger, Cong, & Mahdavi, 2023). This phenomenon demonstrates the ability of digital media to facilitate parasocial relationships one-way relationships that make audiences feel a sense of closeness to media figures even without direct interaction (Albrecht et al., 2021; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Lotz, Johnson, & Gray, 2025).

The growing popularity of ASMR Mukbang has attracted increasing scholarly attention seeking to understand the reasons driving audiences to continue consuming this content. Various studies indicate that the consumption of ASMR Mukbang is driven not only by the need for entertainment but also by the desire to seek new experiences, indirect satisfaction derived from watching others eat, and the need for virtual togetherness facilitated by digital media (Jiang et al., 2025; Kircaburun, Harris, Calado, & Griffiths, 2020). These findings show that ASMR Mukbang is a complex communication phenomenon because it involves various forms of gratification that audiences seek when engaging with media. Therefore, understanding the motivations behind ASMR

Mukbang is important for explaining how audiences interpret, use, and build engagement with digital media content.

In the context of ASMR Mukbang, UGT serves as a relevant framework for explaining why audiences actively choose this type of content over other forms of digital content. Several studies indicate that the consumption of ASMR Mukbang is driven by various needs, ranging from the search for new experiences, vicarious satisfaction through watching others eat, to the need for social connection in digital spaces (Jiang et al., 2024; Kircaburun et al., 2020). From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), individuals actively select media that best satisfies their psychological and social needs. When specific media consistently provide the desired gratifications, users are more likely to develop repeated engagement, stronger emotional attachment, and persistent patterns of media consumption (Chen, Cohen, & Sundar, 2022; Ferris, Hollenbaugh, & Sommer, 2021).

Recent studies have extended the UGT framework by demonstrating that gratification-seeking behaviors can evolve from habitual media use into problematic or obsessive use when users repeatedly rely on the same media to satisfy emotional, cognitive, or social needs (Chen et al., 2022; Ferris et al., 2021). In the context of ASMR Mukbang, viewers obtain multiple forms of gratification, including novelty seeking, vicarious enjoyment through observing others eat, and feelings of virtual companionship, all of which encourage repeated viewing behavior (Jiang et al., 2025; Kircaburun et al., 2020). As these gratifications are repeatedly reinforced, viewers may become increasingly attached to ASMR Mukbang content, resulting in persistent engagement that develops into ASMR Mukbang Obsession (Jiang et al., 2024). Therefore, gratification motivations provide a strong theoretical foundation for explaining why some individuals develop obsessive viewing behavior toward ASMR Mukbang content.

Out-of-town university students in Malang represent a particularly relevant population for investigating ASMR Mukbang Obsession because many pursue higher education away from their hometowns and experience significant social and emotional adjustments during the transition to university life. Living apart from family and long-established social networks may increase feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and the need for emotional regulation, encouraging greater reliance on digital media to fulfill psychological and interpersonal needs (Gunawan et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2024). Video-based platforms such as YouTube provide not only entertainment but also opportunities to experience virtual companionship and emotional comfort through parasocial interaction with content creators (Albrecht et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2024). Furthermore, Indonesia has one of the largest populations of YouTube users, with young adults and university students representing one of the platform's most active user groups (GoodStats, 2026). These characteristics make out-of-town university students in Malang, particularly those living away from their families, an appropriate context for examining how gratification motivations contribute to the development of ASMR Mukbang Obsession.

Although previous studies have identified several motivations underlying ASMR Mukbang Obsession, including Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, and Companionship and Loneliness, limited research has examined the relative influence of these motivations on ASMR Mukbang Obsession (Jiang et al., 2024; Kircaburun et al., 2020). Existing studies have primarily focused on viewing behavior, audience engagement, psychological outcomes, or general media consumption patterns rather than comparing which gratification motivation most strongly predicts ASMR Mukbang Obsession (Jenging & Mohamad, 2022; Kircaburun et al., 2020; Strand & Gustafsson, 2020). Moreover, empirical evidence from Indonesia remains scarce despite the country's high level of YouTube usage and extensive digital media engagement among university students (GoodStats, 2026; Gunawan et al., 2024). This lack of evidence is particularly important given the limited understanding of ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students in Malang, a population that may rely on digital media to fulfill emotional and social needs. Addressing this gap is important because identifying the most dominant gratification motivation

can provide a deeper understanding of why individuals develop persistent engagement with ASMR Mukbang content from the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Rubin, 1983; Ruggiero, 2000). Therefore, this study examines the effects of Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, and Companionship and Loneliness on ASMR Mukbang Obsession and identifies the most influential gratification motivation among out-of-town university students in Malang, Indonesia. Furthermore, this study was conducted among college students in Indonesia, a group that has been relatively underrepresented in the ASMR Mukbang literature. This study makes an empirical contribution to expanding our understanding of audience gratification patterns in different social and cultural contexts. Based on the above discussion, this study aims to answer the research question: “What is the most dominant motivation driving ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students in Malang, Indonesia?”.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the effects of Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, and Companionship and Loneliness on ASMR Mukbang Obsession from the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz & Blumler, 1973; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Rubin, 1983; Ruggiero, 2000). Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the most dominant motivational factor influencing ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students in Malang. Theoretically, this study contributes to the digital communication and audience behavior literature by extending the application of UGT to immersive audiovisual media consumption. Empirically, it provides evidence regarding the relative influence of different gratification motivations on ASMR Mukbang Obsession within the Indonesian context. Practically, the findings offer insights for researchers, digital media practitioners, and content creators in understanding audience motivations and developing digital content that better aligns with users' psychological and communication needs.

Beyond its entertainment value, ASMR Mukbang represents a form of digital communication that creates immersive and socially mediated experiences. The combination of visual cues and auditory stimuli enables viewers to experience eating vicariously, while fostering a sense of psychological presence. Moreover, Horton & Wohl (1956) ASMR Mukbang facilitates parasocial relationships, in which audiences develop a perceived sense of closeness with content creators despite the absence of reciprocal interaction. In ASMR Mukbang, the presence of a creator who speaks, expresses themselves, or simply shows the act of eating can create a sense of togetherness that makes the audience feel like they are part of the experience (Albrecht et al., 2021). Consequently, ASMR Mukbang extends the communicative function of digital media beyond information exchange by providing emotional engagement, virtual companionship, and sensory immersion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of motivational factors on ASMR Mukbang Obsession among university students. The explanatory design was selected because the study aimed to test the relationship between latent constructs derived from the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and students' tendency to engage in repeated ASMR Mukbang consumption. The cross-sectional approach involved collecting data at a single point in time without manipulating the research environment, making it appropriate for analysing media consumption behaviour and psychological motivations.

The study was conducted among university students in Malang City, Indonesia, during April–June 2026. The target population consisted of students who had experience watching Mukbang ASMR content. The accessible population included active students from Universitas Brawijaya, Universitas Negeri Malang, and Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. These universities were selected because they represent diverse student backgrounds and provide an appropriate context for examining digital media consumption behaviour. The study applied a non-probability sampling technique using quota sampling. The sample size was determined based on

the requirements of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), resulting in a total of 430 valid respondents. The participants were selected based on the criteria of being active students, having watched Mukbang ASMR content within the previous six months, and voluntarily completing the questionnaire.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The instrument was adapted from previous research on ASMR Mukbang motivation and was developed based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The questionnaire consisted of four constructs: Alienation and Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, Companionship and Loneliness, and ASMR Mukbang Obsession. Each construct was measured using multiple indicators assessed through a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was translated using a translation-back translation procedure to maintain conceptual consistency between the original and translated versions. Before the main survey, a pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to evaluate item validity and reliability. The results showed that all items met the validity criteria, while Cronbach's Alpha values indicated acceptable internal consistency of the measurement instrument.

The collected data were analysed using SmartPLS 4 through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated by assessing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Second, the structural model was examined by analysing the explanatory power of the model and testing the proposed relationships among constructs using bootstrapping procedures. In addition, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to describe respondent characteristics, including demographic information, viewing frequency, and preferred digital platforms.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	136	32.0
	Female	294	68.0
Age	18–20 years	193	45.0
	21–23 years	188	44.0
	>23 years	49	11.0
University	Universitas Brawijaya	216	50.0
	Universitas Negeri Malang	127	30.0
	UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang	87	20.0
Living Arrangement	Living alone	273	63.0
	Living with roommates	89	21.0
	Dormitory	68	16.0
Viewing Frequency	1–2 times/week	30	7.0
	3–5 times/week	257	60.0
	Every day	143	33.0
Viewing Duration	<30 minutes	64	15.0
	30–60 minutes	154	36.0
	1–2 hours	155	36.0
	>2 hours	57	13.0
Platform	YouTube	127	30.0

TikTok	111	26.0
YouTube & TikTok	80	19.0
Instagram	32	7.0
TikTok & Instagram	32	7.0
YouTube & Instagram	26	6.0
YouTube, TikTok & Instagram	22	5.0

Source : Author's own work

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. A total of 430 valid responses were collected. The majority of respondents were female (68.0%) and aged between 18 and 20 years (45.0%). Most participants were students from Universitas Brawijaya (50.0%) and lived independently during their studies (63.0%). Regarding media consumption, most respondents watched Mukbang ASMR content three to five times per week (60.0%) for approximately one to two hours (36.0%). YouTube was the most frequently used platform (30.0%), followed by TikTok (26.0%). These findings indicate that the sample primarily represents young adults who actively consume Mukbang ASMR content through digital media.

Measurement Model Evaluation

Table 2. Outer Loading Assesment

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>
Alienation & Novelty (X1)	X1_1	0,874
	X1_2	0,859
	X1_3	0,870
	X1_4	0,891
	X1_5	0,839
	X1_6	0,876
	X1_7	0,884
	X1_8	0,862
	X1_9	0,040
Vicarious Satisfaction (X2)	X2_1	0,846
	X2_2	0,862
	X2_3	0,815
	X2_4	0,882
	X2_5	0,846
	X2_6	0,897
	X2_7	0,889
Companionship & Loneliness (X3)	X3_1	0,842
	X3_2	0,872
	X3_3	0,853
	X3_4	0,880
	X3_5	0,890
	X3_6	0,848
Obsesi Mukbang ASMR (Y)	Y_1	0,822
	Y_2	0,854
	Y_3	0,834
	Y_4	0,849
	Y_5	0,896

Source : Author's own work

The measurement model evaluation began with an assessment of indicator reliability using outer loadings. As shown in Table 3, indicator X1_9 exhibited an outer loading of 0.040, which was substantially below the recommended threshold of 0.70. Consequently, this indicator was removed from the measurement model. The remaining indicators demonstrated outer loading values ranging from 0.815 to 0.897, exceeding the recommended threshold and indicating satisfactory indicator reliability.

Table 3. Outer Loading 2 Assesment

Factor	Code	Factor Loading
Alienation & Novelty (X1)	X1_1	0,874
	X1_2	0,859
	X1_3	0,870
	X1_4	0,891
	X1_5	0,839
	X1_6	0,876
	X1_7	0,884
	X1_8	0,862
Vicarious Satisfaction (X2)	X2_1	0,846
	X2_2	0,862
	X2_3	0,815
	X2_4	0,882
	X2_5	0,846
	X2_6	0,897
	X2_7	0,889
Companionship & Loneliness (X3)	X3_1	0,842
	X3_2	0,872
	X3_3	0,853
	X3_4	0,880
	X3_5	0,890
	X3_6	0,848
Obsesi Mukbang ASMR (Y)	Y_1	0,822
	Y_2	0,854
	Y_3	0,834
	Y_4	0,849
	Y_5	0,896

Source : Author's own work

Following the removal of indicator X1_9, the measurement model was re-estimated. As presented in Table 3, all remaining indicators achieved outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its corresponding construct. Therefore, all retained indicators satisfied the indicator reliability criterion and were included in the subsequent analyses.

Table 4. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicators	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Alienation & Novelty	8	0.756	0.954	0.961
Vicarious Satisfaction	7	0.744	0.943	0.953
Companionship & Loneliness	6	0.747	0.932	0.947
ASMR Mukbang Obsession	5	0.725	0.905	0.929

Source : Author's own work

Table 4 presents the results of convergent validity and construct reliability. All constructs achieved Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.725 to 0.756, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.905 to 0.954, while Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.929 to 0.961, all exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.70. These findings confirm that the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity and satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 5. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Alienation & Novelty	Vicarious Satisfaction	Companionship & Loneliness	ASMR Mukbang Obsession
Alienation & Novelty	–			
Vicarious Satisfaction	0.342	–		
Companionship & Loneliness	0.363	0.274	–	
ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.684	0.542	0.474	–

Source : Author's own work

Discriminant validity was further assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). As presented in Table 5, the HTMT values ranged from 0.274 to 0.684, all of which were below the recommended threshold of 0.85. These findings indicate that the constructs exhibit satisfactory discriminant validity and are empirically distinct from one another.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Alienation & Novelty	Vicarious Satisfaction	Companionship & Loneliness	Mukbang ASMR
Alienation & Novelty	0,870			
Vicarious Satisfaction	0,326	0,863		

Companionship & Loneliness	0,344	0,256	0,864	
Mukbang ASMR	0,636	0,502	0,438	0,851

Source : Author's own work

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell –Larcker criterion. As presented in Table 6, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted ($\sqrt{AVE}$), shown on the diagonal of the matrix, exceeded the correlations between constructs in all cases. These findings indicate that each construct is empirically distinct from the others, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Structural Model Evaluation

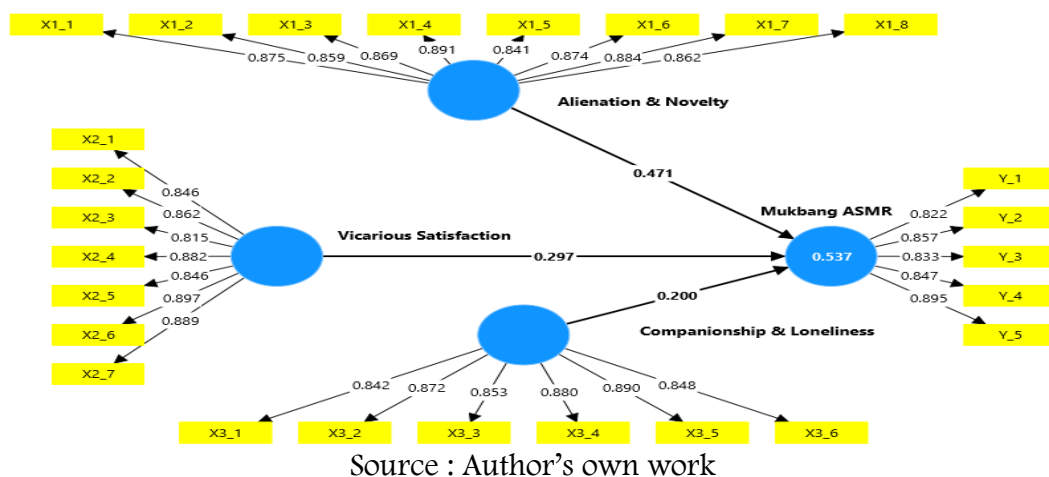
Before evaluating the structural model, collinearity among the predictor constructs was assessed using the Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). As shown in Table 8, the VIF values ranged from 1.149 to 1.218, which are well below the recommended threshold of 3.3 (and also below the more liberal threshold of 5.0). These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern, and the predictor constructs do not exhibit collinearity issues that could bias the estimation of the structural model.

Table 7. Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Structural Relationship	Inner VIF
Alienation & Novelty → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	1.218
Vicarious Satisfaction → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	1.149
Companionship & Loneliness → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	1.164

Source : Author's own work

Figure 1. Structural Model Evaluation



The structural model evaluation showed that the coefficient of determination (R^2) for ASMR Mukbang Obsession was 0.537, indicating that 53.7% of the variance in ASMR Mukbang Obsession is explained by the exogenous constructs included in the model. The remaining 46.3% of the variance may be attributed to other factors not examined in this study.

Table 8. Structural Model Assessment

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Q^2	Interpretation
ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.537	0.5798	Moderate–Substantial

Source : Author's own work

The predictive relevance assessment produced a Q^2 value of 0.5798 for ASMR Mukbang Obsession. Since the Q^2 value is greater than zero, the structural model demonstrates good predictive relevance, indicating that the exogenous variables have satisfactory predictive capability for the endogenous construct. To further assess the robustness of the structural model, bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence intervals were examined. As presented in Table 10, the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for all structural relationships did not include zero. Specifically, the confidence interval for Alienation and Novelty ranged from 0.404 to 0.537, Vicarious Satisfaction ranged from 0.231 to 0.368, and Companionship and Loneliness ranged from 0.120 to 0.275. These findings confirm the statistical significance and stability of the estimated path coefficients, thereby providing additional support for the proposed hypotheses

Table 9. Bootstrapping Bias-Corrected Confidence Intervals

Hypothesized Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	Bias-Corrected 95% CI (Lower)	Bias-Corrected 95% CI (Upper)	Result
Alienation & Novelty → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.471	0.404	0.537	Supported
Vicarious Satisfaction → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.297	0.231	0.368	Supported
Companionship & Loneliness → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.200	0.120	0.275	Supported

Source : Author's own work

Based on the effect size (f^2) analysis presented in Table 11, Alienation & Novelty has the strongest effect on ASMR Mukbang Obsession ($f^2 = 0.393$), followed by Vicarious Satisfaction ($f^2 = 0.166$), while Companionship & Loneliness shows the smallest effect ($f^2 = 0.074$). According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, Alienation & Novelty demonstrates a large effect, Vicarious Satisfaction exhibits a medium effect, and Companionship & Loneliness has a small effect on ASMR Mukbang Obsession.

Table 10. Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2	Interpretation
Vicarious Satisfaction → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.166	Medium
Alienation & Novelty → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.393	Large
Companionship & Loneliness → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.074	Small

Source : Author's own work

Hypothesis Test

The proposed hypotheses were tested using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4. As presented in Table 12, all hypothesized relationships were found to be positive and statistically significant, indicating that all research hypotheses were supported.

Table 11. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-statistic	p-value	Result
H1	Alienation & Novelty → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.471	13.764	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	Vicarious Satisfaction → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.297	8.527	< 0.000	Accepted
H3	Companionship & Loneliness → ASMR Mukbang Obsession	0.200	5.034	< 0.000	Accepted

Source : Author's own work

The results indicate that Alienation & Novelty has the strongest positive influence on ASMR Mukbang Obsession ($\beta = 0.471$), followed by Vicarious Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.297$) and Companionship & Loneliness ($\beta = 0.200$). These findings demonstrate that all three motivational dimensions significantly contribute to ASMR Mukbang Obsession among university students. Among them, Alienation & Novelty emerged as the most influential predictor, suggesting that the desire to seek novel experiences and escape from daily routines plays a greater role in explaining obsessive Mukbang ASMR viewing than vicarious satisfaction or companionship needs.

Discussion

The Influence of Alienation and Novelty on ASMR Mukbang Obsession

The findings indicate that Alienation & Novelty is positively associated with ASMR Mukbang Obsession ($\beta = 0.471$; $p < 0.001$), making it the strongest motivational predictor among the three dimensions examined. This suggests that students primarily consume Mukbang ASMR to obtain psychological escape and novel sensory experiences. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), audiences actively choose media that satisfy their psychological and emotional needs (Katz & Blumler, 1973; Ruggiero, 2020). The immersive audiovisual characteristics of Mukbang ASMR provide relaxation and temporary relief from daily stress, which may encourage repeated viewing and eventually develop into obsessive consumption.

The prominence of Alienation & Novelty can also be interpreted within the context of out-of-town university students in Malang. Many students migrate from their hometowns to pursue higher education, requiring them to adapt to new academic demands, social environments, and independent living. Such transitions may increase feelings of stress, homesickness, and emotional fatigue. Consequently, Mukbang ASMR may function as an easily accessible form of psychological escape, providing relaxation and sensory enjoyment after academic activities. This contextual interpretation suggests that novelty seeking and emotional escape represent particularly relevant motivations for this population.

The present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that these motivations are the strongest predictors of ASMR Mukbang Obsession specifically among out-of-town university students in Malang. The immersive combination of visual eating scenes and ASMR sounds provides relaxation and temporary psychological relief, encouraging repeated exposure that may develop into obsessive viewing (Chen et al., 2022; Ferris et al., 2021). This finding supports Jiang et al. (2024) and Kircaburun et al. (2020), while extending prior research by demonstrating that psychological escape represents the dominant gratification driving ASMR Mukbang Obsession among Indonesian out-of-town university students.

The Effect of Vicarious Satisfaction on ASMR Mukbang Obsession

This finding indicates that respondents who derive greater enjoyment from observing others consume food tend to exhibit stronger obsessive viewing tendencies. Vicarious Satisfaction reflects symbolic consumption, whereby viewers experience psychological gratification without directly participating in eating activities. Watching creators consume large quantities of visually appealing food, accompanied by ASMR sounds, may evoke feelings of sensory pleasure and emotional fulfillment despite the absence of actual food consumption. Such experiences may encourage repeated exposure because viewers continue to seek similar gratifying experiences.

Among out-of-town students, this motivation may also relate to practical circumstances. Living away from family often requires students to manage limited financial resources, cooking facilities, and time constraints. Consequently, Mukbang ASMR may provide symbolic enjoyment that partially substitutes for desired eating experiences without requiring actual consumption. Although the present study did not directly examine these mechanisms, this interpretation offers a plausible explanation for the observed relationship. This result supports previous studies indicating that vicarious consumption is one of the primary motivations underlying Mukbang viewing behavior and contributes to the development of habitual media consumption (Jiang et al., 2024; Kircaburun et al., 2020). Vicarious Satisfaction also contributed significantly to ASMR Mukbang Obsession, suggesting that viewers derive enjoyment from symbolically experiencing food consumption through others. UGT explains that audiences intentionally choose media that fulfill emotional and experiential needs without direct participation (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Through visually appealing food and immersive ASMR sounds, Mukbang enables viewers to experience sensory pleasure and symbolic consumption (Smith & Snider, 2019). This finding is consistent with Jiang et al. (2024) and Kircaburun et al. (2020), although its relatively smaller contribution indicates that symbolic gratification is less influential than psychological escape in explaining obsessive viewing behavior.

The Effect of Companionship and Loneliness on ASMR Mukbang Obsession

The results indicate that Companionship & Loneliness is positively associated with ASMR Mukbang Obsession ($\beta = 0.200$, $p < 0.001$). Although this association is weaker than those of Alienation & Novelty and Vicarious Satisfaction, the findings suggest that out-of-town university students who experience greater feelings of loneliness tend to report higher levels of Mukbang ASMR obsession. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), individuals actively select media that satisfy their social and emotional needs. Mukbang ASMR offers more than audiovisual entertainment; it also provides a sense of social presence through creators' conversational style, direct eye contact, and simulated shared dining experiences. These characteristics may temporarily fulfill viewers' need for companionship, encouraging repeated engagement with Mukbang ASMR content (Katz & Blumler, 1973; Ruggiero, 2020).

This finding is particularly relevant to out-of-town university students in Malang, who often experience homesickness and reduced social interaction while adapting to a new academic and social environment. In this context, Mukbang ASMR may function as an accessible source of emotional comfort by creating the perception of dining together with the content creator despite the one-sided interaction. These findings are consistent with Hermina et.al (2025), who reported that Mukbang viewing strengthens parasocial relationships and encourages continued viewing, and with Jiang et al. (2024), who found that social motivations significantly predict Mukbang ASMR obsession. However, the relatively smaller effect observed in this study suggests that companionship functions as a complementary rather than primary motivation underlying ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students.

The Dominance of Motivational Factors in ASMR Mukbang Obsession

The structural model indicates that Alienation & Novelty ($\beta = 0.471$) is the strongest predictor of ASMR Mukbang Obsession, followed by Vicarious Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.297$) and Companionship & Loneliness ($\beta = 0.200$). The primary objective of this study was to identify the most dominant motivation underlying ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students. The structural model demonstrates that Alienation & Novelty is the strongest motivational factor, followed by Vicarious Satisfaction and Companionship & Loneliness. This pattern suggests that students primarily engage with Mukbang ASMR as a means of psychological escape and novelty seeking rather than symbolic food consumption or virtual social interaction. These findings indicate that gratification motives contribute unequally to obsessive Mukbang ASMR consumption. While Mukbang ASMR simultaneously fulfills emotional, symbolic, and social needs, motivations related to psychological escape exert the greatest influence on repeated engagement. Accordingly, this study extends Uses and Gratifications Theory by demonstrating that escapism represents the primary gratification driving obsessive interaction with immersive digital media among Indonesian out-of-town university students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigated the associations between Alienation & Novelty, Vicarious Satisfaction, Companionship & Loneliness, and ASMR Mukbang Obsession among out-of-town university students in Malang City from the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory. The findings indicate that all three motivational dimensions are positively associated with ASMR Mukbang Obsession. Among them, Alienation & Novelty emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by Vicarious Satisfaction and Companionship & Loneliness. These results suggest that, within this population, students who seek psychological escape and novel experiences tend to report stronger obsessive engagement with Mukbang ASMR content than those primarily motivated by symbolic consumption or virtual companionship. Theoretically, this study extends the application of Uses

and Gratifications Theory by demonstrating that different gratification motives contribute with varying strengths to

Mukbang ASMR Obsession. Specifically, motivations related to novelty seeking and psychological escape appear to be more prominent than social companionship in explaining obsessive viewing tendencies among out-of-town University students. From a practical perspective, the findings provide insights for researchers, educators, and digital content creators regarding the psychological motivations underlying Mukbang ASMR consumption among University students living away from their hometowns. Understanding these motivational patterns may facilitate the development of media literacy initiatives and digital well-being strategies that encourage healthier media consumption behaviors.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design captures associations at a single point in time and therefore does not permit causal inference. Second, the use of purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings beyond out-of-town university students in Malang City. Third, all variables were measured using self-reported questionnaires, which may be affected by recall bias and social desirability bias. Finally, because the data were collected using a single survey instrument administered at one time point, the study may be susceptible to common method bias, despite the implementation of procedural remedies such as anonymity, informed consent, and randomized questionnaire items. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better understand temporal relationships among motivational factors and Mukbang ASMR Obsession. Studies involving more diverse populations and probability sampling methods would also improve external validity. Additionally, incorporating variables such as parasocial relationships, audience engagement, digital media addiction, psychological well-being, self-control, and viewing intensity may provide a more comprehensive understanding of obsessive Mukbang ASMR consumption.

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