



**How should social media influencers tell compelling stories
through video blogs?
A study of storytelling features on live comments**

Journal:	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics</i>
Manuscript ID	APJML-11-2023-1113.R3
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Social media influencers, Storytelling strategies, Live comments, Video blogs

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How should social media influencers tell compelling stories through video blogs?

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Purpose: Utilizing the extended transportation-imagery model, this study categorizes three storytelling elements into six distinct factors—character types, influencer-character congruence, imaginable titles, concrete details, replication difficulty, and artistic processing—to explore how these factors enhance influencer engagement.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study utilized a quantitative research design, analyzing 1,660 influencer-created videos over a six-month period. Narrative elements were examined through manual coding, and their impact on live comments was assessed using negative binomial regression to identify key factors driving audience engagement.

Findings: Research results show that non-fictional characters, imaginable titles, and concrete details significantly increased live comments. Conversely, high replication difficulty negatively influenced engagement. Notably, influencer-character congruence and artistic processing showed no significant effect.

Originality: This study advances the extended transportation-imagery model by integrating narrative elements with live comments, offering new perspectives on real-time audience engagement. The findings deepen our understanding of how storytelling techniques enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing. From a managerial standpoint, this research provides strategic insights for influencers and brands to refine their content strategies, ultimately boosting audience engagement.

Keywords: Social media influencers; Video blogs; Storytelling strategies; Live comments

1. Introduction

Social media influencers (SMIs), who are highly active on platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube, have become influential figures in the digital landscape. These individuals attract substantial followings by sharing expertise and insights in areas such as travel, fashion, and food (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Consequently, an increasing number of companies are integrating influencers into their marketing strategies to broaden their reach and enhance campaign effectiveness (Kim and Kim, 2021). Projections indicate that by the end of 2024, more than 85% of marketers will invest in influencer marketing, with expenditures expected to reach \$24 billion (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024).

The literature on influencer marketing has examined content characteristics like sponsorship transparency, informational value, and content authenticity's impact on consumers (Han et al., 2021; Wang and Chan-Olmsted, 2022; Wang and Weng, 2023; Dong et al., 2024). However, research on the narrative strategies used by influencers and their effects on consumer behavior is limited. Most narrative strategy studies focus on the brand perspective, exploring their influence on brand preference, self-brand attachment, and brand attitudes (Belaid and Temessek Behi, 2011; Nagar, 2019; Tezer et al., 2019), leaving a significant gap in understanding narrative strategies within influencer marketing.

To fill this gap, this study systematically analyzes how narrative elements in influencer-generated content influence audience engagement, particularly through live comments. Drawing on the extended transportation-imagery model proposed by Van Laer et al. (2014), this study focuses on three key factors that influence narrative effectiveness: identifiable characters (including character types and influencer-character congruence), imaginable plots (including

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4 imaginable titles and concrete details), and verisimilitude (including replication difficulty and
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7 artistic processing).

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9 Theoretically, this study contributes by applying the extended transportation-imagery model
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11 to influencer-generated content, validating its applicability and revealing how narrative strategies
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13 impact real-time audience feedback through live comments. Practically, the findings provide
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15 marketers and influencers with guidance on optimizing content strategies to enhance audience
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17 engagement, which is crucial for sustaining engagement in a competitive digital marketing
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19 environment.
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25 **2. Literature review and hypotheses**

26 *2.1 Influencer marketing*

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28 Influencer marketing, introduced by Brown and Hayes (2008), is defined as the
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30 implementation of marketing strategies through individuals who can influence customers, with
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32 social media as a key channel. As consumers increasingly rely on social media, using influencers
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34 to promote products and brands has become a preferred strategy for companies. Influencers
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36 provide compelling pre-purchase experiences, fostering consumer identification (Belanche et al.,
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38 2021).
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45 Existing research has explored the impact of influencer video content on audience
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47 engagement, focusing on factors such as sensory language, social ties, food portrayal, image
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49 richness, and follower size (Pancer et al., 2019; Valsesia et al., 2020; Kim and Kim, 2021; Abell
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51 and Biswas, 2022; Cascio Rizzo et al., 2023; Chung et al., 2023), as detailed in Table 1.
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55 However, existing studies have predominantly focused on visual and linguistic elements,
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57 with limited exploration of the role of narrative strategies within influencer content. This study
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seeks to address this gap by focusing on the impact of narrative strategies in influencer videos on live comments—an area that has not been sufficiently explored in existing research. Unlike previous studies that primarily analyze static engagement metrics (e.g., likes and shares), this study examines the dynamic and interactive nature of live comments, which reflect real-time audience engagement.

Additionally, this study incorporates the extended transportation-imagery model into influencer marketing content, offering a new perspective on how narrative strategies influence consumer behavior in digital environments. By uncovering the impact of storytelling on real-time audience feedback, such as live comments, this research not only fills a gap in existing literature but also provides marketers and influencers with more targeted strategies to effectively engage with their audiences and enhance marketing outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of Literature on the Impact of Influencer Video Content Elements on Engagement

Authors (year)	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Social media platforms	Findings
Abell and Biswas (2023)	Person pictured with healthy/unhealthy food	Click-through rate, likes, sharing	Facebook	Healthy food images near a person lead to higher engagement and product trial
Cascio Rizzo et al (2023)	Sensory Language	Likes, comment	Instagram/TikTok	Sensory language boosts perceived authenticity, increasing engagement and purchase intent
Cascio Rizzo et al (2023)	High/low-arousal language	Likes and comments	Instagram	High-arousal language increases engagement for micro-influencers but decreases it for macro-influencers
Chung et al (2023)	Referencing Close Social Ties	Likes	Instagram	Posting about close ties (family, friends, partners) enhances engagement
Holiday et al (2023)	Facial emotion/Textual emotion	Likes, comments, views	Instagram	Amount and type of emotion significantly influence engagement
Hughes et al (2019)	Blogger characteristics, blog post content	Likes, comments	Facebook	Sponsored blogging's impact on engagement varies by blogger traits, content, platform, and advertising intent

Pancer et al (2019)	Text readability	Comments, sharing	Facebook	Easy-to-read posts attract more likes, comments, and shares
Valsesia et al (2020)	Following (less vs. more)	Likes, Retweets, Click-through	Twitter	Having fewer followings while having many followers boosts perceived influence
Zhao et al (2023)	Image richness	Comments, sharing, likes	Sina Weibo	Image richness positively affects emotional and behavioral engagement but negatively affects cognitive engagement
This study	Storytelling strategy	Live comments	Bilibili	Non-fictional characters, Influencer-Character Congruence, Imaginable Titles, and Concrete Details enhance live comments; Replication Difficulty reduces real-time discussion.

2.2 Live comments

Existing research in influencer marketing mainly focuses on metrics like “likes,” “comments,” and “shares,” while studies on live comments as a form of engagement are limited (Kafeza et al., 2021; Aljuhmani et al., 2023). Traditional metrics emphasize overall video content, overlooking details and causing time lags in opinion expression. Live comments, however, offer real-time feedback, accurately capturing audience reactions (Kang et al., 2021; Zeng et al., 2023). They are interactive, entertaining, and useful for assessing the effectiveness of social media content (Zhang et al., 2020a). Studies reveal that live comments enhance viewing experience, increase user satisfaction (Chen et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020), and improve brand perception (Zhang et al., 2024a), while fostering a sense of companionship among viewers (Hu et al., 2017). This study highlights the role of live comments in refining influencers’ narrative strategies, thereby enhancing audience engagement.

2.3 Narrative strategy

The generation of live comments is not only a natural expression of viewers’ immediate reactions but also the result of carefully designed narrative strategies (Singh and Sonnenburg,

2012; Dessart and Pitardi, 2019). In narrative transportation theory, “narrative” is referred to as the story, and “transportation” is defined as the process by which the audience receives and becomes immersed in the story (Gerrig, 1993). Based on this framework, a comprehensive model, known as the extended transportation-imagery model, was developed by Van Laer et al. (2014), which synthesizes both the antecedents and consequences of narrative transportation.

Three key elements influence narrative transportation in storytelling: identifiable characters, imaginable plots, and verisimilitude. Effective narrative strategies not only enhance the appeal of the content but also facilitate communication and interaction among viewers, thereby strengthening the dissemination of social media content (Septianto et al., 2021). Drawing on the extended transportation-imagery model, it is posited that video content generated by influencers is perceived as a story, with the influencers being the creators and narrators of the story, and the audience as the primary recipients. Specifically, it is proposed that identifiable characters are represented by character types and influencer-character congruence; imaginable plots are characterized by imaginable titles and concrete details; and verisimilitude is manifested through replication difficulty and artistic processing. In the subsequent sections, an explanation will be provided on how these three elements influence live comments.

2.3.1 Identifiable characters

Consumers engage with stories and achieve narrative transportation through empathy with story characters (Escalas, 2004; Van Laer et al., 2014). Identifiable characters can be analyzed through two primary dimensions: character types and influencer-character congruence.

This study categorizes story characters into fictional and non-fictional types. Fictional characters often appear in games, TV shows, and other narratives, while non-fictional characters

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4 are real-life individuals, such as social media influencers. Existing literature in influencer
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6 marketing indicates that virtual influencers face several disadvantages compared to real
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8 influencers, suggesting that non-fictional characters are more effective in audience engagement
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10 (Zhou et al., 2024). Research further shows that audiences exhibit stronger reactions to human
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12 characters than to animated ones. Sheldon et al. (2021) found that parasocial interactions with
13
14 fictional characters are significantly weaker than those with human characters. Additionally,
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16 non-fictional characters are more relatable, enhancing resonance and narrative immersion
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18 (Dessart, 2017). Empathy with these characters is more likely to elicit emotional responses
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20 through ongoing interaction (Dessart et al., 2016). Real-life characters also foster greater affinity,
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22 positively shaping audience attitudes (Delbaere et al., 2011). Based on this, the following
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24 hypothesis is proposed:
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32 *H1.* The use of non-fictional characters in social media videos is positively related to the
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34 likelihood of viewers posting live comments.
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38 Influencer-character congruence reflects the extent to which social media influencers display
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40 their traits, lifestyle, and capabilities through the characters in their videos (Soutter and Hitchens,
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42 2016). According to social penetration theory, sharing personal feelings and opinions accelerates
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44 relationship building. As followers perceive a closer connection, they develop stronger attachment
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46 and curiosity about the influencer's life (Wood and Burkhalter, 2014). This congruence not only
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48 strengthens emotional ties but also builds trust (Belanche et al., 2021), which further encourages
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50 audience engagement, such as through live comments.
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56 When influencers showcase personal experiences, audiences are more likely to identify
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58 similar traits in themselves, fostering positive alignment and encouraging them to express
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4 agreement through comments (Schouten et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2022). Influencer-character
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6 congruence also stimulates viewers' motivation for self-expression, as they resonate with the
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9 influencer's traits or lifestyle (Shan et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

11 H2. Influencer-character congruence in social media videos is positively related to the
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14 likelihood of viewers posting live comments.

17 2.3.2 Imaginable plot

19 Narrative transportation theory suggests that consumers immerse themselves in a narrative
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21 through empathy with characters and imagination of the plot (Van Laer et al., 2014). The plot
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23 includes both the sequence and causality of events (Dessart and Pitardi, 2019). This study posits
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25 that plot imagination begins not only during story consumption but also as soon as viewers
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27 encounter the story's title or overview. Consumers' imagination can be categorized into two
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29 phases: title-triggered and content-triggered.
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35 Video titles are crucial as they significantly influence viewers' decision to engage with the
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37 content (Tafesse, 2020). According to Lopezosa et al. (2020), titles serve two main functions:
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39 providing information and stimulating interest. For example, a title like "Is Kicking an Assailant
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41 Considered a Crime?" not only conveys information but also creates suspense and curiosity
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43 (Green and Brock, 2000).
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48 Imaginable titles often generate suspense or pose open-ended questions, increasing viewers'
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50 curiosity and engagement (Scott, 2021). This curiosity leads to active thinking and participation,
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52 often expressed through live comments, where viewers react in real-time. Based on this, the
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54 following hypothesis is proposed:
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58 H3. The use of imaginative titles in social media videos is positively related to the likelihood
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4 of viewers posting live comments.
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6 This study uses the presence of detailed story elements in video content to measure its
7 effectiveness in stimulating audience imagination. Concreteness involves depicting character
8 actions or settings in a realistic and tangible manner (Brysbart et al., 2014). Influencers often use
9 vivid imagery and concrete details as narrative techniques (Escalas, 2004; Chang, 2009). Concrete
10 content not only adds story-related details but also incorporates situational elements like time,
11 place, and actions, helping audiences connect with the narrative (Escalas, 2004). Lou and Yuan
12 (2019) argue that high informational value in content significantly encourages audience
13 discussion.
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27 When videos present rich details, audiences immerse themselves in the storyline, leading
28 them to share perspectives and emotions through live comments. Based on this, the following
29 hypothesis is proposed:
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35 *H4.* The presence of concrete details in social media videos is positively related to the
36 likelihood of viewers posting live comments.
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40 2.3.3 *Verisimilitude*

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42 This study measures verisimilitude to distinguish between personal videos created by social
43 media influencers and traditional narrative advertising. Traditional ads aim to enhance brand
44 reputation and drive consumer purchases (Escalas, 2004), whereas social media influencers often
45 build influence through continuous self-exposure (Kim and Song, 2016). Influencer videos are
46 thus more likely to reflect authentic life experiences and skill demonstrations rather than fictional
47 narratives. However, the portrayal of these experiences and skills can vary in difficulty and style.
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59 Verisimilitude in this study is measured through replication difficulty and artistic processing.
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4 In social media content, replication difficulty refers to how easily viewers can imitate the
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6 video. Low replication difficulty involves scenarios that are easy for viewers to replicate, while
7
8 high replication difficulty showcases unique skills achievable only by the creators. Although high
9
10 replication difficulty enhances content uniqueness (Tian et al., 2001), it may also create a
11
12 disconnect between the content and audience, potentially reducing engagement (Leung et al.,
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14 2022). Additionally, such content often prioritizes skill demonstration over fostering interaction.
15
16 According to self-efficacy theory, viewers' perception of their abilities influences their
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18 engagement behavior (Gecas, 1989). If viewers find it hard to understand or replicate the skills
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20 shown, their self-efficacy diminishes, lowering their motivation to interact (Stott, 2016).
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22 Therefore, while these videos may showcase originality, they might limit immediate interaction
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24 and comments. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:
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32 *H5.* Replication difficulty in social media video is negatively related to the likelihood of
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34 viewers posting live comments.
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38 Excessive artistic processing can disrupt real-time audience discussions. Over-modification
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40 may detach the story from reality, weakening empathetic connections, which are crucial for
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42 promoting emotional responses and interaction (Dessart et al., 2015). Additionally, excessive
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44 artistic elements can alienate the story from real-life contexts, hindering feedback and discussion.
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46 An overload of visual effects may lead to information saturation, making it difficult for viewers to
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48 focus on the content or provide immediate feedback (Cao and Sun, 2018). Complex artistic
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50 processing can also disrupt the viewing flow, reducing engagement (Sohn, 2017). Therefore, while
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52 enhancing visual appeal, excessive artistic processing may negatively impact live comments.
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54 Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:
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H6. Artistic processing in social media videos is negatively related to the likelihood of viewers posting live comments.

The research framework is Figure 1.

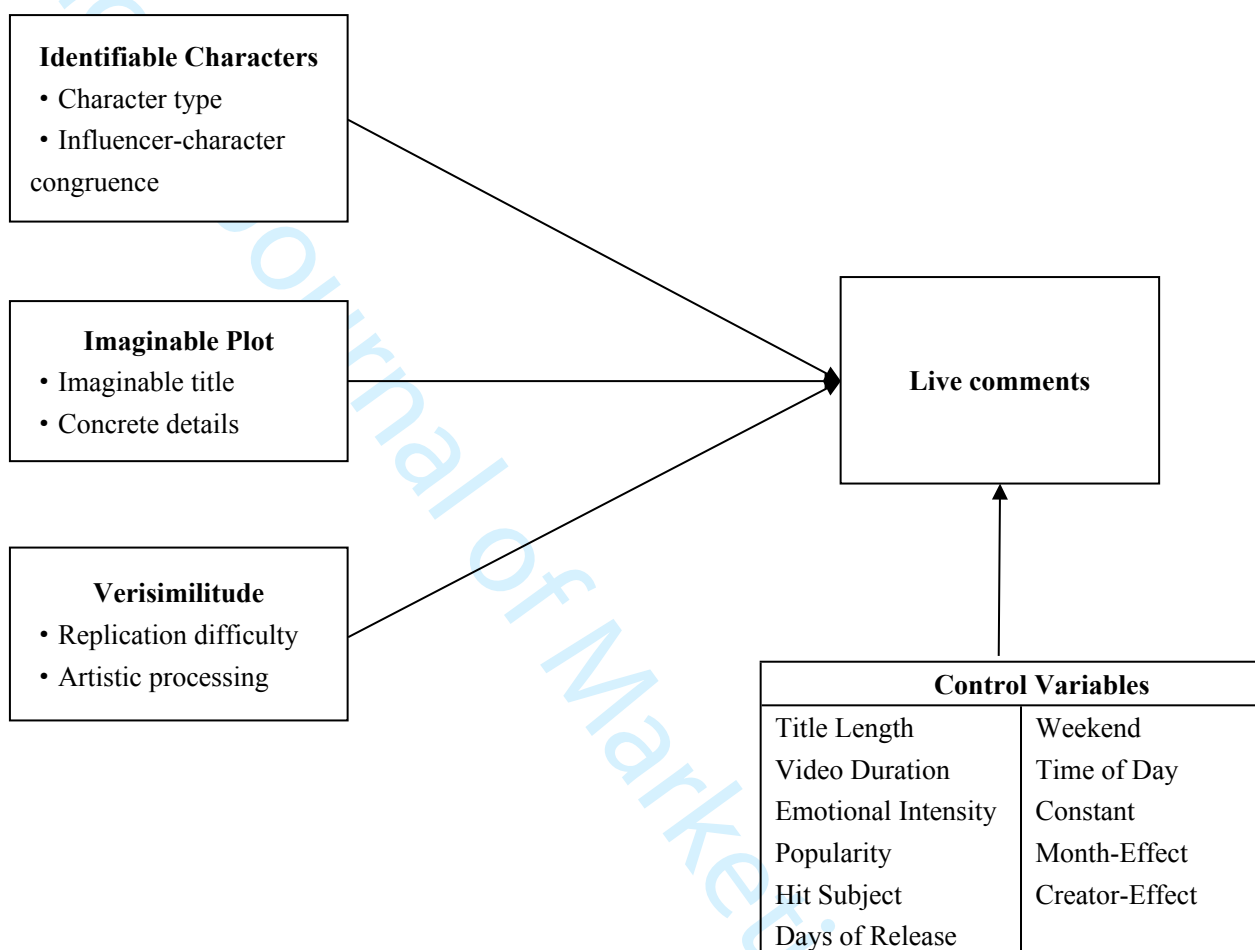


Figure 1. Research framework

3. Methods

3.1. Research context

The research platform for this study is Bilibili, a popular Chinese social media site similar to YouTube, where users can upload their generated content (Zhang et al., 2020a). In addition to features like “likes,” “shares,” and “comments,” Bilibili allows real-time live comments, facilitating immediate interaction based on video content. Many scholars use Bilibili for influencer research (e.g., Chen et al., 2023).

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4 The reasons for selecting Bilibili are threefold: Firstly, Bilibili serves as a highly
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6 concentrated cultural community in China, around which a high-quality content ecosystem has
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8 been established. Secondly, compared to other platforms like YouTube and TikTok, Bilibili excels
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10 in live commenting, offering more comprehensive user engagement metrics, such as likes, shares,
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12 live comments, and coins. These live comments enable the monitoring of real-time interactions
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14 between viewers and video content. Thirdly, Bilibili has a comprehensive influencer management
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16 system, making it easy to track influencer rankings and follower data (Zhang et al., 2024).
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18 Notably, the text and timing of live comments are publicly available, ensuring no violation of
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20 research ethics (Zhang et al., 2020).
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26 27 *3.1.1 Personal brand sampling*

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29 Bilibili hosts a large number of professional users (advertisers or official company accounts),
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31 yet not all users are identifiable as social media influencers (SMIs). Firstly, the number of
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33 followers is used as a criterion to identify the top 100 professional users as social media
34
35 influencers. Secondly, a distinction is made between accounts operated directly by individuals and
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37 those representing a brand image. Accounts owned by an individual possessing multiple accounts
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39 are also excluded. It is then required that accounts must have at least three personal video uploads
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41 per month, with at least one of these achieving over one million views during the assessment
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43 period. After three rounds of screening, the final sample size was determined.
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49 50 *3.1.2 Data collection*

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52 This study collected all personally generated content uploaded by the top 100 professional
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54 user accounts on the Bilibili platform from May 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, totaling
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56 approximately 20,000 items. From this content, we excluded any associated with commercial
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58 brands, content that was deleted by influencers within six months of posting, and videos longer
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4 than 20 minutes or shorter than one minute. We reasoned that commercially sponsored videos do
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7 not adequately showcase the characteristics and capabilities of influencers. Following stratified
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10 sampling, the content underwent screening and coding by coders, leading to the analysis of 1,660
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12 pieces of personally generated content. Additionally, this study collected data on each video's
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14 number of live comments, views, duration, and posting date, using the Bilibili API.

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17 *Dependent variable.* This study uses live comments as a measure of the audience's real-time
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19 feedback and interaction at specific narrative points within the video. The dependent variable is
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22 quantified by the total number of live comments per video.

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25 *Content coding.* Six experienced Bilibili users with over five years on the platform
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27 participated in this study. Familiar with Bilibili's culture, they discussed influencer video content
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29 and identified six key factors. Coding standards were then developed and reviewed by social
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31 media experts to ensure validity (see Appendix 1).

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35 Based on expert feedback, the coding standards were optimized for reliability and
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37 practicality, ensuring an accurate reflection of the video's core characteristics. Three coders
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39 manually assessed the story elements using pre-established criteria, ensuring data consistency (see
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41 Table 2). In cases of disagreement, a third independent coder adjudicated. The inter-coder
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43 reliability was 0.79 (>0.70) (Tellis et al., 2019).

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48 *Independent variables.* In this study, the independent variables, including character type,
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50 influencer-character congruence, imaginable titles, concrete details, replication difficulty, and
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52 artistic processing, were coded based on the guidelines detailed in Table 2.

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56 *Control variables.* The control variables are divided into two categories: those that do not
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58 require manual coding, such as video duration and title length, and those that necessitate manual
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coding, such as the presence of real conflict and emotional intensity.

Control variables that don't require manual coding include video duration, title length, view count, influencer's follower count (popularity), days of release, and time of day (evening) (see Table 2). Video duration refers to the length of the story, measured in seconds. Title length is primarily quantified by the number of words in the title. View count denotes the number of times a video has been watched six months after its release. The influencer's follower count represents the total number of users on Bilibili who follow or subscribe to the influencer's account. Days of release refers to the total number of days elapsed since the content was posted on the Bilibili platform. Time of day indicates the specific period during the day when the content was uploaded to the social media platform, typically categorized into morning, afternoon, and evening segments.

Control variables obtained through manual coding include the presence of hit subject and emotional intensity (see Table 2). While hit subjects are not direct factors of story elements, they readily capture audience attention and spark lively discussions. In our coding process, hit subjects are treated as a categorical variable (0 = absent, 1 = present). Previous research has shown that emotions in videos can elicit emotional responses and sharing behaviors among viewers (Rubenking, 2019). In this study, the emotional intensity within videos was coded. The emotional intensity specifically refers to the strength of emotions expressed by social media influencers (SMIs) and is measured on a six-point scale (0 = "none at all," 5 = "very strong"), aiming to capture the level of emotional intensity conveyed to the audience by the story theme.

Table 2. Independent and control variable measurement

Variable	Measurement
	Identifiable characters
Character type	Categorical variable (0=fictional character, 1= non-fictional)

	character) “Can the characters in the story actually exist in real life?”
Influencer-character congruence	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “Does this video give you enough insight into the life circumstances and personal abilities of social media influencers?”
Imaginable plot	
Imaginable title	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “Does the video create a problem or set a scene in the title?”
Concrete details	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “Does the content of the video show concrete details in the story?”
Verisimilitude	
Replication difficulty	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “Possibility of video content being imitated or copied?”
Artistic processing	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “To what extent can the video be perceived as being artistically processed?”
Control variable	
Video duration	Total duration of the video, in seconds
Title length	Total number of words in title
The number of plays	Total number of plays
Hit subject	Binary scale (0=indicates absence, 1=indicates presence) “Whether the subject of the video is related to the current hot content or exposes some kind of real-life contradiction”
Emotional intensity	Six-point scale (0=very weak, 5=very strong) “The intensity of social media influencers’ emotional expressions in videos”

3.2. Data processing

3.2.1 Methodology

Firstly, videos with a high number of live comments were more likely to be concentrated from the same social media influencer (SMI) or revolve around a specific topic, showing a trend of concentration rather than randomness. Secondly, the variance of dependent variable was significantly higher than the corresponding means. Consequently, given these data characteristics, a negative binomial regression method was selected for our study. Additionally, social media influencers might adjust the timing of their content release based on audience feedback. Therefore, fixed effects, including the day of the week (weekend vs. weekday), creator effect, and month

effect, were incorporated to ensure the accuracy of the analysis.

3.2.2 Descriptive statistics

In this study, a total of 1,660 videos were coded. The average title length was 25 words, with an average video duration of 534 seconds (approximately 9 minutes) and an average of 152 days since release. Additionally, the minimum follower count among the social media influencers involved was 1,950,000, indicating they are all mega-influencers in their fields (Conde and Casais, 2023) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Data descriptive statistics.

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Independent variables				
Non-fictional character	0.69	0.46	0	1
Influencer-character congruence	4.18	1.15	0	5
Imaginable title	2.8	0.89	0	5
Concrete details	4.49	0.84	0	5
Replication difficulty	3.46	1.34	0	5
Artistic processing	1.84	1.54	0	5
Dependent variables				
Live comments	14097.42	18240.96	412	105974
Control variables				
Title length	24.78	9.83	5	50
Video duration	533.54	241.46	75	1178
Hit subject	0.1	0.29	0	1
Emotional intensity	0.48	0.26	-1	1
Days of Release	151.92	73.39	19	364
Popularity	517 0000	262 0000	195 0000	1370 0000
Weekend	0.23	0.42	0	1
Evening	0.47	0.5	0	1

4. Results

The negative binomial regression model for live comments:

$$\log(\lambda_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_{1i} \text{Character type} + \beta_{2i} \text{Influencer_Character congruence} + \beta_{3i}$$

$Imaginable\ title + \beta_{4i}Concrete\ details + \beta_{5i}Replication\ difficulty + \beta_{6i}$

$Artistic\ processing + \beta_{7i}log(Title\ length) + \beta_{8i}log(Video\ duration) + \beta_{9i}$

$Emotional\ intensity + \beta_{10i}log(Popularity) + \beta_{11i}Hit\ subject + \beta_{12i}$

$log(Days\ of\ release) + \beta_{13i}Weekend + \beta_{14i}(Time\ of\ day) + \varepsilon_{1i}$

4.1. The number of live comments

Table 4 presents the impact of various story elements on live comments. Non-fictional characters are positively correlated with live comments ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypothesis 1. Influencer-character congruence has no significant effect, so hypothesis 2 is not supported. Imaginable titles show a positive correlation with live discussions ($\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.1$), supporting hypothesis 3, as they stimulate viewers' curiosity (Tafesse, 2020). Concrete details correlate positively with live comments ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis 4, by enhancing the connection between the audience and the narrative (Escalas, 2004). Replication difficulty negatively correlates with audience discussion ($\beta = -0.07$, $p < 0.01$), supporting hypothesis 5. Artistic processing level has no significant effect on live comments, thus hypothesis 6 is not supported. Detailed correlation analyses in Table A2 of Appendix 2 further explain these relationships.

Table 4. Statistical results of story elements and live comments

	(1)	(2)
		Live Comments_nbreg1
VARIABLES	Live Comments	Live Comments
Non-fictional Character		0.24*
		(0.11)
Influencer-Character Congruence		0.10
		(0.10)
Imaginable Title		0.05+

		(0.03)
Concrete Details		0.09**
		(0.03)
Replication Difficulty		-0.07**
		(0.02)
Artistic Processing		0.03
		(0.04)
Title Length(log)	-0.14	-0.18
	(0.17)	(0.15)
Video Duration(log)	0.72**	0.72**
	(0.09)	(0.08)
Emotional Intensity	0.09	0.08
	(0.10)	(0.11)
Popularity(log)	4.02**	4.40**
	(0.39)	(0.59)
Hit Subject	0.06	0.05
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Days of Release(log)	0.44*	0.33*
	(0.17)	(0.16)
Weekend	0.03	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Afternoon	-0.01	-0.00
	(0.06)	(0.07)
Evening	0.00	-0.00
	(0.05)	(0.06)
Constant	-58.17**	-64.20**
	(5.41)	(8.46)
Observations	1,594	1,594
Month-Effect	YES	YES
Creator-Effect	YES	YES
Independent Variables	-	-
Control Variables	-	-
alpha	0.372	0.356
Pseudo R2	0.0670	0.0694

4.2. Robustness checks

To ensure the robustness of our findings, multiple robustness tests were conducted. First, we replaced the original dependent variable (live comments) with likes. The results indicated that non-fictional characters and concrete details positively influenced both types of user engagement

(likes and live comments), while influencer-character congruence and artistic processing showed similar trends (see Table A3 in Appendix 3), confirming the reliability of our analytical method and the generalizability of social media engagement metrics.

Additionally, we analyzed videos shorter than 10 and 15 minutes, with results consistent with the overall findings, further reinforcing the robustness of the conclusions. A random sampling of 1,000 videos from the 1,900 available yielded results consistent with the full dataset, indicating the generalizability of our findings. We also conducted a bootstrap analysis with 1,000 resamples, which confirmed the model's stability.

Lastly, we assessed multicollinearity among variables using the variance inflation factor (VIF). All scores were below 10, within the acceptable range (Zeng et al., 2023), supporting the reliability and stability of our regression results (see Table A4 in Appendix 4).

Overall, the robustness tests, including dependent variable substitution, video duration analysis, random sampling, bootstrap analysis, and multicollinearity tests, demonstrate the robustness and generalizability of our research findings.

Table 5. Robustness checks using different video duration thresholds, random sampling, and bootstrap analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Live Comments_10min	Live Comments_15min	Live Comments_rand	Live Comments_boot
VARIABLES	Live Comments	Live Comments	Live Comments	Live Comments
Non-fictional Character	0.29*	0.25*	0.28*	0.24**
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.09)
Influencer-Character Congruence	0.05	0.13	0.07	0.10*
	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.04)
Imaginable Title	0.08*	0.04	0.03	0.05
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)

Concrete Details	0.09*	0.06+	0.06*	0.09**
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Replication Difficulty	-0.05	-0.06*	-0.07**	-0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Artistic Processing	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Title Length(log)	-0.23*	-0.14	-0.09	-0.18*
	(0.11)	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.07)
Video Duration(log)	0.53**	0.72**	0.73**	0.72**
	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.04)
Emotional Intensity	0.01	0.08	0.22	0.08
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.08)
Popularity(log)	4.25**	4.55**	3.58**	4.40**
	(0.41)	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.89)
Hit Subject	-0.09	-0.01	0.20+	0.05
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Days of Release(log)	0.14	0.31	-0.01	0.33*
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.16)
Weekend	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Afternoon	-0.00	-0.03	0.04	-0.00
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Evening	-0.02	-0.02	0.01	-0.00
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Constant	-59.32**	-66.38**	-49.88**	-64.20**
	(6.05)	(8.72)	(8.94)	(13.35)
Observations	1,032	1,453	956	1,594
Month-Effect	YES	YES	YES	YES
Creator-Effect	YES	YES	YES	YES
Control Variables	-	-	-	-
alpha	0.301	0.349	0.342	0.356
Pseudo R2	0.0812	0.0708	0.0712	0.0694

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study expands the application of storytelling strategies in influencer marketing,

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4 highlighting their crucial role in brand building and consumer engagement. While existing
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6 research often focuses on the impact of storytelling strategies on brand preference, attachment,
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8 and attitudes (Belaid and Temessek Behi, 2011; Nagar, 2019; Tezer et al., 2019), it overlooks their
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10 integration with the content output of social media influencers. By analyzing influencers' narrative
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12 content, this study fills that gap, offering new insights for marketing strategies.
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17 Furthermore, this research is the first to integrate storytelling elements with live comments
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19 within a unified framework, providing a new perspective for digital engagement studies. Previous
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21 research typically uses likes, comments, and shares as participation indicators (Abell and Biswas,
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23 2022; Cascio Rizzo et al., 2023) but fails to capture real-time audience reactions. This study
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25 addresses this by exploring the relationship between storytelling elements and live comments,
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27 aiding influencers in crafting more effective narrative strategies to enhance their celebrity capital.
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32 *5.2. Practical implications*

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35 For marketers, this study provides effective storytelling strategies. By analyzing how
36
37 narrative elements in videos influence live comments, it finds that non-fictional characters,
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39 imaginable titles, and concrete details positively impact live comments, while replication
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41 difficulty may have a negative effect. These insights guide influencers in standing out on social
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43 media and enhancing brand influence.
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49 In brand marketing, the study aids brands in selecting influencers that align with their image
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51 and designing engaging narratives to boost audience engagement and brand building, fostering
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53 long-term growth. Analyzing live comments also helps brands optimize their marketing strategies.
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57 For social media platforms, the findings assist in optimizing content recommendation
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59 algorithms to increase user engagement. Platforms can use these insights to guide influencers in
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4 creating more compelling content, strengthening the content ecosystem.
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7 *5.3. Limitations and future research*

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9 This study focuses on content strategies on social media platforms. Future research should
10 expand to platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as each has distinct user demographics
11 and content preferences (Vithayathil et al., 2020), potentially influencing strategy effectiveness.
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13 Given the current study's limitation in cross-platform comment analysis, Natural Language
14 Processing technology becomes crucial. NLP can examine linguistic patterns, themes, and
15 sentiment expressions. By adopting a broader research scope and advanced technologies, future
16 studies can better optimize influencer content strategies to enhance audience engagement and
17 content impact.
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30 **6. Conclusion**

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32 This study, using the extended transportation-imagery model, manually coded 1,660
33 influencer-generated videos and employed a negative binomial regression model to examine how
34 six story elements (influencer-character congruence, imaginable titles, concrete details, replication
35 difficulty, and artistic processing) impact live comments.
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43 Results indicate that realistic characters and content showcasing personal environments or
44 skills positively affect live comments, while influencer-character congruence shows no significant
45 effect. Imaginable titles create psychological anticipation, prompting critical engagement with the
46 video and encouraging comments. Rich story details increase the likelihood of follower
47 comments, while higher replication difficulty creates a sense of distance, negatively affecting
48 engagement. The level of artistic processing has no significant impact.
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Appendix 1

Interview Process

a. Based on the extended transportation-imagery model, this study needs to analyze the story features of the video content generated by influencers. Then, we need to determine the specific definition of each variable.

b. Six 5-level users have been using Bilibili for more than seven years were selected as the participants. Bilibili was founded on June 26, 2009, and the highest level that users can reach is level 6. In other words, we selected interview participants who have experienced almost the whole process of Bilibili development and use Bilibili frequently. Therefore, the user group selected in this study is representative.

c. The five experts have doctoral degrees in this study are all researchers engaged in social media research.

d. We summarized the coding direction proposed by senior users, and then sent the scheme to five experts for review. After receiving feedback from five experts, we conducted on the coding works under the guidance of two associate professors who study social media.

Appendix 2

Table A2: Correlation Analysis of Main Variables

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
(1)	Live Comment	1														
(2)	Non-fictional Character	0.14*	1													
(3)	Influencer-Character Congruence	0.24*	0.59*	1												
(4)	Imaginable Title	0.03	0.12*	0.16*	1											
(5)	Concrete Details	0.08*	0.24*	0.28*	0.22*	1										
(6)	Replication Difficulty	0.03	0.14*	0.28*	0.10*	0.18*	1									
(7)	Artistic Processing	-0.13*	-0.46*	-0.57*	-0.23*	-0.26*	-0.50*	1								
(8)	Title Length	-0.27*	-0.07*	-0.12*	0.41*	0.18*	0.08*	-0.11*	1							
(9)	Video Duration	0.25*	-0.20*	-0.11*	0.02	-0.06*	0.07*	0	-0.04	1						
(10)	Emotional Intensity	0.02	0	0.02	-0.19*	-0.03	0.02	0.10*	-0.32*	0.05*	1					
(11)	Popularity	0.48*	0.09*	0.20*	-0.15*	-0.10*	-0.06*	-0.10*	-0.38*	0.11*	0	1				
(12)	Hit Subject	0.10*	0.15*	0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.17*	-0.07*	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.09*	0.30*	1			
(13)	Days of Release	0.18*	0.10*	-0.04	0.02	0.10*	0.01	-0.05*	0.01	-0.08*	-0.02	-0.05	0.03	1		
(14)	Weekend	0.03	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0	0.05	-0.02	0.04	0.03	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.05*	0.01	1	
(15)	Evening	-0.07*	-0.01	-0.02	0.08*	0.07*	0.03	0.05	0.18*	-0.01	-0.05*	-0.11*	-0.06*	0.02	-0.08*	1

Appendix 3

Table A3: Robustness Check for the Impact of Story Elements on Likes

VARIABLES	Likes	
	(1)	(2)
Independent Variables		
Non-fictional Character		0.12* (0.05)
Influencer-Character Congruence		0.12 (0.09)
Imaginable Title		0.03 (0.02)
Concrete Details		0.07** (0.02)
Replication Difficulty		-0.02 (0.02)
Artistic Processing		0.05+ (0.03)
Control Variables		
Title Length (log)	-0.05 (0.15)	-0.07 (0.13)
Video Duration (log)	0.15* (0.07)	0.14* (0.06)
Emotional Intensity	0.30** (0.09)	0.29** (0.10)
Popularity (log)	3.22** (0.38)	3.46** (0.54)
Hit Subject	0.05 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)
Days of Release (log)	0.22 (0.14)	0.14 (0.14)
Weekend	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.04)
Evening	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)
Constant	-39.97** (5.39)	-43.99** (7.92)
Month-Effect	YES	YES
Creator-Effect	YES	YES
Observations	1,594	1,594
alpha	0.220	0.211
Pseudo R2	0.0634	0.0652

Appendix 4**Table A4: VIF values between various variables**

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Non-fictional character	1.77	0.565
Influencer-character congruence	2.12	0.473
Imaginable title	1.33	0.749
Concrete details	1.21	0.826
Replication difficulty	1.46	0.686
Artistic processing	2.14	0.468
Title Length (log)	1.63	0.613
Video Duration (log)	1.12	0.889
Hit subject	1.2	0.833
Emotional intensity	1.13	0.883
Popularity (log)	1.42	0.706
Evening	1.05	0.950
Days of Release (log)	1.05	0.957
Weekend	1.02	0.978