

Affective Rupture and Fatigue at Commercialization Nodes: A Study of Social Media Discourse Based on the Viral Phenomenon of Jingdezhen's "Chicken Cutlet Brother"

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Abstract. As short-video platforms have become a key part of urban marketing, street vendors have quickly gained attention and now hold symbolic meaning in city life. Public sentiment about them has changed quickly because of new trends and commercialization. Jingdezhen's "Chicken Cutlet Brother" is a typical case of this phenomenon. He initially gained attention through humorous interactions, then began to gradually participate in official events, and served as a cultural tourism ambassador for Jingdezhen. However, as exposure and commercial collaborations increased, sentiment in Douyin comment section gradually shifted from positive to fatigue and dislike. To understand this shift, this paper analyzes Douyin comments through data collection and sentiment classification. It identifies three stages in sentiment shifts: viral surge phase, commercialization intensification phase, and fatigue and disengagement phase. The study further examines the relationship between key commercialization nodes and shifts in public sentiment. This paper finds that commercialization nodes served as clear triggers and amplifiers, shifting what was originally a relaxed interactive experience towards an exhausting evaluation. It also reflects the dynamic emotional relationship between influencers, platform mechanisms, and urban narratives, offering a new discourse analysis method for understanding sentiment shifts of current internet-famous cities.

Keywords: Affective rupture, Commercialization nodes, Internet-famous cities, Douyin

1. Introduction

As short-video platforms have become a key part of urban marketing, street vendors have quickly gained attention and packaged as "viral hotspots." However, with increased exposure and commercialization, public sentiment has increasingly shifted from positive to skepticism and fatigue. As a result, affective rupture and social media fatigue are keyways to understand internet-famous cities.

Jingdezhen's "Chicken Cutlet Brother" is a typical case of this phenomenon. He first gained attention as the fried chicken vendor outside the school gate through his humorous interactions, later becoming part of the local cultural tourism narrative and participating in official and commercial events. Throughout this process, comments on the Douyin showed a noticeable sentiment shift.

Public sentiment evolved from initial positive reactions like "I want to go check it out" to later boredom, such as "it's lost its charm." Therefore, the commercialization nodes may be the crucial moment triggering affective rupture and fatigue.

Current research primarily focuses three aspects. First, studies on internet-famous cities analyze how short videos participate in urban image production and emotional value, and also highlighting the risks of backlash from popularity and retention challenges [1-8]. Second, research on influencer commercialization often indicates that high frequency commercial collaborations change audience perceptions of authenticity and motivation to lead to diminished trust and aversion [9-12]. Also, studies on social media fatigue discuss user exhaustion, reduced engagement to lead to withdrawal because of information overload and stress. These studies also explore what factors influence this process and how it can be measured [13-15]. Therefore, this paper uses the Jingdezhen "Chicken Cutlet Brother" case to analyze emotional shifts and commercialization evaluation within Douyin comments discourse. The core research question is how commercialization nodes on Douyin trigger affective ruptures and fatigue during the viral popularity of the Jingdezhen Chicken Cutlet Brother?

2. Literature review

2.1. Emotional contagion and affective rupture

Research indicates that emotions play an important role in information diffusion. Brady et al. noted that strong emotions such as anger and moral outrage are more likely to trigger sharing, showing a significant accelerator effect in spreading information [16]. Wang and Lee further found that negative emotions, such as fear, sadness, and anger, substantially increase the probabilities of interaction and diffusion [17]. Emotion functions as a fundamental mechanism that shapes diffusion pathways, rather than serving as an additive attribute of content. Yu et al. emphasized that different types and combinations of emotions produce distinct diffusion outcomes instead of a single linear relationship [18].

According to Lampredi's concept of "emotional rupture," it refers to a state where an individual's previously default emotional stance becomes inconsistent under specific events or practices, forcing them to reinterpret and reassess their feelings [19,20]. Building on this concept, this paper extends affective rupture to a process in which an emotional order is disrupted and undergoes reorganization, in which existing emotional connections become unstable under specific circumstances, and sentiments shift from relatively consistent orientations toward differentiation and even opposition. This perspective provides the theoretical basis for analyzing how emotions in the viral "Chicken Cutlet Brother" phenomenon transitioned from a relatively stable state to conflict and fragmentation.

2.2. Internet-famous cities, grassroots influencers, and emotional value

Sun introduced the concept of "cyber cities," noting that the short videos produced residents and tourists together construct the city's image in cyberspace, and through the emotional bonding effect, these videos facilitate collective mobilization [1]. Focusing on emotional value and the affective economy, Sun and Wang found that tourism acts as an "emotional industry," where using different types of emotional value helps destinations quickly move beyond niche markets [3]. Wang and Jin further emphasized of transforming emotional value into consumer behavior and urban influence [4]. Meanwhile, studies also systematically examine risks behind viral popularity. Wang noted that when popularity primarily depends on platforms with focused themes, it is more likely to retain audiences and may lead to backlash [6]. Ge suggested that if grassroots individuals are often

included in urban stories and seen as city representatives, negative views about these individuals can lead people to question the city's brand and its cultural tourism stories [8]. Overall, research reveals the mobilization and risk of emotional value, but it remains insufficient understanding of how emotions shift in platform interactions and thus trigger fatigue and disengagement.

2.3. Influencer commercialization and social media fatigue

Research indicates that brand collaborations reshape audiences' perceptions of influencers' motivations and authenticity, and therefore triggering trust erosion and backlash. Hudders et al. emphasized that the excessive commercialization of internet celebrities weakens fan trust [9]. Audrezet et al. highlighted from an authenticity perspective that mismatched or excessive collaborations are more likely to trigger crisis [10]. Moreover, from a platform relationship, Abidin's concept of "visibility labor" indicated fan interactions naturally promote hidden labor, which is passively drawing them into commercial processes [11]. Relatedly, Fernandes & Oliveira found that based on the S-O-R model, excessive brand content and advertising investment increase social media fatigue and drive disengagement [12]. Liu et al. also noted "lurking and exiting" was users' emotional responses and self-protection against overload and anxiety [15]. Generally, research has examined the relationship between influencer commercialization and social media fatigue, but most focus on influencers and brand collaborations. There remains a gap in analyzing how affective rupture is triggered and amplified through short video comment.

Therefore, building upon the research of emotional contagion, internet-famous cities, and influencer commercialization, this paper focuses on the relationship of sentiment, individual influencer and city image. First, by extending the definition of affective rupture, this paper applies it to the viral surge phase, commercialization intensification phase, and fatigue and disengagement phase, examining how sentiment is continually restructured across these three stages. Moreover, this paper examines the role of grassroots workers in shaping a city's cultural and tourism image, and reveals how commercialization nodes simultaneously trigger individual image and urban brand risks.

3. Research design and methods

Based on shifts in platform engagement and commercialization involvement, the paper divides the timeline into three phases:

Viral surge phase (September 21–30): Short videos about Chicken Cutlet Brother experienced a rapid surge in likes and interactions on Douyin, and even push into trending charts. These videos are mostly daily records, with public comments showing positive sentiments like curiosity. Public comments mostly express sentiments like "I want to go to Jingdezhen" and "I'm going to check it out," with Chicken Cutlet Brother being seen as an emotional window to Jingdezhen.

Commercialization intensification phase (October 1–October 25): With continuous exposure, official and media coverage of Chicken Cutlet Brother, along with brand collaborations, has been steadily increasing. Public attention has gradually shifted from Chicken Cutlet Guy to discussions about whether authenticity will be lost.

Fatigue and disengagement phase (October 26–November 30): The video's popularity has gradually declined, while official collaborations have not decreased. The increase in negative comments, such as "I'm sick of seeing this," indicates a noticeable fatigue and backlash among the public. Also negative feedback has shifted from targeting Chicken Cutlet Brother to questioning Jingdezhen's city image and its cultural tourism narrative.

The study uses content analysis with the Douyin platform as the data source. By searching keywords such as "Chicken Cutlet Brother" and "Jingdezhen Chicken Cutlet Brother," a total of 45 videos with high relevance to the case and notable views and interactions were collected. The video account covers personal accounts, media and official accounts, and general public accounts from September 21, 2025, to November 30, 2025. After cleaning and removing duplicates from 19,591 text records, non-comment content such as pure emojis, single characters, duplicate texts was removed, yielding 5,400 valid comments. Next, the comments were divided into three phases based on the timeline, forming 600 analysis samples. A fixed number of 200 comments was randomly sampled from each phase to ensure balanced coverage and comparability across the three phases.

By comparing the differences in comments across three phases, this analysis examines the relationship between commercialization nodes and affective rupture and fatigue. Dimensions include: (1) affective attitude: positive, negative, neutral, and no clear affect; (2) affect type: happiness, anger, disappointment, boredom, etc.; (3) target of reference: Chicken Cutlet Brother, Jingdezhen and its cultural tourism departments, collaborating brands, platforms, and others; (4) commercialization evaluation: whether commercial elements like official events or brand collaborations are mentioned; (5) fatigue and withdrawal expressions: presence of phrases like "tired of it," "don't want to see more," or "unfollowed" indicating fatigue or disengagement; (6) comment type: slogans, evaluations, narratives, informational statements, suggestions, or appeals; (7) emotional intensity: low, medium, or high.

4. Research outcomes

The results use statistical analysis and representative comment texts to examine shifts in sentiment, discourse orientation, and fatigue expressions.

4.1. Viral surge phase

During the viral surge phase, most comments focused on public evaluation and suggestions. The majority showed no clear affect (58.5%), while 21.5% were negative, 17.5% were positive, and 2.5% were neutral. In terms of intensity, low intensity dominated (96%), while high intensity accounted for only 3.0%. There were no fatigue or disengagement during this phase (0%).

During the viral surge, most comments focused on connecting cultural tourism to cities. Over half (54.5%) mentioned Jingdezhen and its cultural tourism departments, while 36.5% referred to Chicken Cutlet Brother himself. Only 9% discussed platforms and media. At the same time, 50.5% of comments evaluated commercialization, mainly discussing how cultural tourism could make use of the increased attention.

People are forming positive views of grassroots workers and also questioning how well local cultural tourism can handle visitors. Many comments use sarcasm or give advice on how the tourism sector could handle crowds. Some people also praise Chicken Cutlet Brother's image. For example:

"Jingdezhen Tourism: Paying six bucks for work worth six million."

"I'd have to visit Jingdezhen just for him."

4.2. Commercialization intensification phase

In the commercialization intensification phase, most people showed no clear affect (48%), while negative emotions rising to 32.5%, positive emotions at 14%, and neutral sentiments at 5.5%. Compared to the previous phase, high-intensity expressions have significantly increased (17%),

while the public increasingly mentions fatigue and exit (21.5%). This indicates that the public is starting to feel tense about high-frequency exposure and commercialization.

The most noticeable change was that platforms and audiences became more visible as targets. Content targeting platforms and media increased to 23.5%, reaching the highest proportion across all three phases (see table 1). At the same time, 30.5% of content focused on Chicken Cutlet Brother himself, while 28.5% targeted Jingdezhen and its cultural tourism department. Additionally, 14% of comments mentioned commercialization-related topics, mainly about product promotion and account growth.

In the comments, people increasingly expressed fatigue with phrases like "block" and "don't want to see this." This growing sentiment led to a stronger outpouring of emotions later on:

"Douyin just wants to create another sales puppet."

"I don't know if it'll collapse, but once the traffic dries up... let's see how you guys grow your accounts."

4.3. Fatigue and disengagement phase

The fatigue and disengagement phase showed the most significant emotional divergence and fatigue. Negative sentiment peaked at 39.5%, which was the highest across all three phases, while the positive dropped to 12.5%. Also no clear affect accounted for 41.5%, and neutral sentiment rose to 6.5%. Fatigue-related expressions reached 41.5% (see table 1), and high-intensity expressions also increased to 28%. This indicates the public expressed stronger aversion and withdrawal during this period.

Regarding target of reference, the focus shifted to Chicken Cutlet Brother (30.5%), with Jingdezhen and its cultural tourism department (30%), and platforms and media (14%). Meanwhile, the proportion of "others" increased (25%), showing that the public discussion has become increasingly decentralized, shifting from initial individual perspectives to assessments and debates on cultural tourism platforms. Additionally, it was noted that the commercialization proportion stands at 19.5%, though lower than in the first phase, public discourse has focused on questioning and debating the profitability.

During the disengagement phase, comments showed explicit expressions of fatigue and withdrawal and traffic consumption, such as:

"After this one round, Chicken Cutlet Brother is switching to a real job."

"Bro, you really need to take a break. Your body is yours, but tourism is someone else's. You're working yourself to death."

Table 1. Percentage distribution across stages

Dimensions	Viral Surge Phrase	Commercialization Intensification Phase	Fatigue and Disengagement Phase
Positive	17.5%	14%	12.5%
Negative	21.5%	32.5%	39.5%
No clear affect	58.5%	48.0%	41.5%
Neutral	2.5%	5.5%	6.5%
Mention commercialization	50.5%	14%	19.5%
Mention fatigue and exit	0%	21.5%	41.5%
High intensity emotion	3%	17%	28%

Table 1. (continued)

Directed at Chicken Cutlet Brother	36.5%	30.5%	30.5%
Directed at Jingdezhen and cultural tourism departments	54.5%	28.5%	30.0%
Directed at platforms and media	9.0%	23.5%	14.0%

5. Conclusion

This study uses a content analysis method and comparing comment discourses to explore how commercialization triggers affective rupture and fatigue. During the viral surge phase, most comments are showing curiosity, and lighthearted memes. However, as official accounts, media coverage, and brand collaborations increasing rapidly, the focus of discussion has shifted from individual accounts to questions of authenticity. This indicates that an increase in negative emotions and expressions predicts the emergence of affective rupture. In terms of the fatigue and disengagement phase, negative expression has become more noticeable, with phrases like "I'm annoyed" and "unfollowed." Meanwhile, the orientation extends beyond individual levels to raise questions about the cultural tourism and platform.

Therefore, across these three stages, the emotional shift is not a loss of interest, but rather a reevaluation of the commercialization nodes. When frequent exposure to commercialization occurs, the public is more likely to shift from positive sentiment toward skepticism and division. In this case, commercialization nodes act as triggers and amplifiers. They both spark public discourse and magnify the public's affective rupture and fatigue through sustained exposure.

This study also has several limitations. First, the coding process inevitably involves some subjective factors, especially the assessment of emotional intensity, and target of reference. Therefore, the boundaries of emotions could be ambiguous. Moreover, since the sample focuses on high interactive videos and comments, so the sample is more likely to present high-volume opinions. Third, platform may have governance actions such as deleting comments or hiding posts to misrepresent the true distribution of the comment. Furthermore, the platform is limited to Douyin, which fails to capture the full opinions of sentiment.

Future study will include more detailed coding and involve multiple coders to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data. The data source will also include more platforms such as Weibo, Red Note, and Bilibili, or use multiple cases to compare changes in public sentiment in the background of internet-famous cities. In terms of the commercialization nodes, there should have specific types such as official interventions, media reports, brand collaborations, and offline event to compare the emotional in different phrases.

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