

Beauty and Broadcast: Cross-Cultural Narratives in Cosmetics Livestream

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Abstract: *Livestream commerce has become a global marketing force, transforming consumer engagement through interactive storytelling. Its rapid rise stresses the need to examine how persuasive narratives operate across cultural contexts. However, Cross-cultural comparisons in livestream are especially lacking, leaving unclear how cultural orientations shape narrative persuasion. This study addresses this gap through a qualitative thematic analysis of 60 livestreams from Red Note (China) and Amazon (United States). By focusing on narrative construction, persuasive strategies, communication style and transactional framing, the research aims to reveal how cultural values are embedded in digital persuasion and to extend Hofstede's and Hall's frameworks into livestream commerce. Results show that Red Note emphasizes expert authority, tutorial-based persuasion, and collectivist intimacy, while Amazon foregrounds self-use testimonials, authentic sharing, and individualist autonomy. These findings highlight livestream commerce as culturally shaped communication, where sensitivity to cultural factors is crucial for the effective design of global marketing strategies.*

Keywords: Cosmetics livestream, Cross-culture, Digital narratives, Red Note, Amazon.

1. Introduction

The digital landscape of consumer markets has markedly reshaped brand-consumer communication, particularly through the booming of livestreaming commerce, a format that merges real-time interaction, storytelling, and transactional immediacy [1]. As defined in the platform research, livestream shopping offers viewers immersive, interactive experiences with virtual product demonstrations and instant purchase mechanisms [2]. This innovative format has become especially potent in the beauty sector, where consumers seek more sense-engaging information and emotional connection with products.

Within cross-cultural marketing, beauty livestreams provide a unique arena to explore how cultural values and narrative frames shape consumer engagement [3]. Cosmetics are intricately woven with cultural ideals of identity, beauty, and self-care. When streamers narrate product features, share personal experiences, or integrate cultural aesthetics, they do more than sell and further they construct beauty ideals by narrative across diverse cultural contexts [4]. Despite the global expansion of livestreaming, existing research has largely examined technologically mediated consumer behavior or localized cases; few studies have examined how narrative immersion and cultural framing intersect in beauty livestreams.

Narrative persuasion is a critical pathway in digital marketing communications, particularly through the mechanism of narrative transportation, an immersive state where consumers suspend critical disbelief and cognitively engage with the narrated world [5]. In the context of e-commerce livestreaming, narrative transportation has been shown to moderate the relationship between entertainment and flow, with storytelling enhancing consumer immersion and increasing purchase intention [6]. These findings suggest that livestream narratives, especially emotive storytelling, can profoundly influence consumer behavior by creating cognitive immersion.

Cross-cultural dynamics further complicate this landscape. Cosmopolitan beauty markets differ markedly in their cultural orientations: collectivist societies often emphasize relational intimacy and peer trust, while individualist markets often value expertise, scientific credibility, and brand prestige. Narrative strategies in livestreams may accordingly differ: East Asian streams may foreground social connectedness and communal identity, whereas Western streams may emphasize technical efficacy and personal transformation. Yet comparative research is scarce. Research on narrative branding in global media suggests that culturally adaptive storytelling enhances international brand resonance and retention [6][7]. Integrating such insights with narrative transportation theory provides fertile ground for understanding how livestream narratives can bridge or engage cultural differences in viewer immersion. Recognizing cultural variation in narrative reception is thus crucial for more inclusive and effective livestream marketing strategies.

Despite its importance, cross-cultural narrative analysis in beauty livestreaming remains underexplored. Most empirical work focuses on single-market studies or structural mechanisms like product placement and platform features. Explicit integration of narrative immersion, cultural resonance, and consumer cognition remains largely absent. Addressing this gap will enrich theory, in terms of narrative persuasion, cultural marketing, and cognitive engagement; and shed light to practice, by informing culturally sensitive content strategies for global livestream campaigns.

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically compare narrative structures, linguistic framing, and cultural adaptation in beauty livestreams across contrasting markets, analyzing how narrative immersion (transportation) mediates consumer engagement. Examining livestreams from different cultural contexts will reveal how storytelling functions as a culturally situated persuasion mechanism in digital beauty marketing, which could generate a contribution that bridges fragmented literatures and advances a more nuanced cross-cultural marketing theory and practice. For that end, the study is geared towards the following research questions:

- 1) What culturally specific patterns of narrative persuasion distinguish livestream commerce on Red Note and Amazon?
- 2) How do these patterns reflect broader cultural orientations, and what insights do they offer for adapting global marketing strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cosmetics Livestream

In recent years, advancements in live streaming technologies have significantly enhanced the digital experience, making it more pleasant, interactive, and immersive for audiences across various platforms and contexts. Against this backdrop, cosmetics livestream has emerged as a prominent and rapidly growing phenomenon within digital marketing, representing a convergence of social commerce, influencer marketing, and interactive media [8]. This trend reflects both the prevalence of livestream platforms and the increasing importance of real-time, personalized consumer engagement in the beauty industry. While direct scholarly research specifically focused on cosmetics livestream remains limited, studies on related areas such as influencer marketing, digital cosmetics promotion, and livestream shopping provide important insights into the mechanisms by which such marketing strategies influence consumer behavior. Collectively, these studies indicate that cosmetics livestream functions not merely as a promotional tool but as a narrative medium that can actively shape perceptions of product efficacy, trustworthiness, and desirability. The literature suggests that livestream enables brands to create immersive, real-time experiences that combine visual demonstration, storytelling, and social interaction, which are difficult to replicate in traditional marketing channels [9].

Theoretical frameworks applied to this area primarily draw on consumer behavior and technology adoption models. Research grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework highlights how specific stimuli, such as livestreamer characteristics, platform interactivity, and product presentation, elicit internal organism responses, including emotional engagement, perceived trust, and cognitive appraisal [10]. These responses subsequently influence behavioral outcomes, such as purchase intentions, impulse buying, and loyalty. The S-O-R perspective provides a comprehensive lens to systematically examine the mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies impact consumer decision-making in livestream contexts.

Empirical findings from related studies reinforce these theoretical propositions. Research demonstrates that interactivity and authenticity are central to the effectiveness of livestream marketing. Influencer credibility, expertise, and perceived authenticity all would significantly affect consumer trust and the likelihood of purchase, especially in the cosmetics domain where visual and sensory evaluation plays a key role [11]. Studies analyzing real-time engagement, such as viewer comments, reactions, and live polls, indicate that dynamic interaction fosters a sense of co-presence, increasing the perceived value of the livestream event and the products showcased [12]. Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that livestream allows for multi-sensory demonstrations—such as

close-up displays of textures, colors, and finishes—which enhance viewers' ability to evaluate product quality remotely, thereby reducing perceived purchase risk [13]. This aspect is particularly salient in cosmetics, where factors like skin compatibility, application technique, and aesthetic outcomes are highly subjective and difficult to convey through static media.

Methodologically, studies have employed surveys, experiments, and content analysis to assess the effectiveness of livestream in marketing. For example, studies have analyzed viewer comments and reactions during livestreams to gauge engagement levels and identify factors that influence purchase decisions [14]. Such approaches provide valuable insights into consumer behavior in the context of livestream.

Taken together, the literature underscores both the promise and complexity of cosmetics livestream as a marketing and narrative medium. It highlights the need for more targeted research that examines the interplay between narrative techniques, interactive features, and cultural context in shaping consumer engagement and purchase decisions. Future studies could investigate which forms of storytelling—such as experiential tutorials, testimonial-driven narratives, or expert-guided demonstrations—are most effective across diverse cultural audiences. Moreover, research integrating cross-cultural perspectives would provide nuanced insights into how different populations perceive authority, authenticity, and aesthetic appeal in cosmetics livestreams, offering practical guidance for global marketing strategies. In sum, while current research establishes a foundational understanding of the theoretical and empirical mechanisms underlying cosmetics livestream, significant opportunities remain to advance knowledge regarding narrative persuasion, interactive engagement, and cultural adaptation in this increasingly prominent domain of digital marketing.

2.2 Cultural Factors in Digital Narratives

The literature on cultural factors in digital narratives has revolved around the view that narrative persuasiveness in contemporary multimedia environments is a product of universal cognitive mechanisms, such as imagery, transportation or flow [15]. Additionally, it is of culturally contingent interpretive schemas that shape how narratives are produced, received, and acted upon [16]. Empirical and theoretical research shows that multimedia affordances matter. Interactivity, visual richness, and real-time feedback make narratives more powerful. They help create immersive mental simulation, also known as transportation. They also trigger stronger emotional engagement. Together, these effects lead to persuasive outcomes such as attitude change, higher purchase intention, and increased followership [17]. Research on livestream shopping and influencer storytelling backs this up. Experiments and eye-tracking studies find that when streamers show products and use their own presence, viewers focus more and are quicker to buy [18]. Whereas survey and mixed-method work indicates that parasocial interaction, perceived authenticity, and narrative identification mediate longer-term trust and loyalty [19]. Systematic reviews and syntheses further argue that cognitive-narrative models—especially the Extended Transportation-Imagery Model (ETIM)—offer a robust explanatory framework for

connecting sensory imagery, affective arousal, and persuasion across digital formats [20].

Despite substantial agreement on the centrality of transportation, imagery, and social presence, the literature diverges on several consequential issues. First, scholars debate which narrative components exert the strongest causal influence. Some studies emphasize affective and entertainment-driven appeals, arguing that they promote immersion and minimize counter-arguing, thereby enhancing persuasive effectiveness [21]. On the flip side, other studies emphasize expertise-based, informational appeals, like technical demonstrations, ingredient evidence, and scientific claims, as necessary for credibility in high-involvement product categories such as cosmetics [22]. Second, findings diverge on the mediating mechanisms of persuasion: while some highlight trust, often shaped by cultural expectations, as the central pathway to sustained engagement, others point to transient states such as flow or arousal as stronger predictors of impulse purchasing [23]. Third, the question of cross-cultural generalizability remains unsettled: whereas single-country investigations often report robust effects of specific narrative strategies, comparative research reveals that the effectiveness of these strategies can vary substantially across cultural contexts [24].

These divergences can be attributed to methodological, contextual, and theoretical factors. Methodologically, variation in research designs—including laboratory experiments, field sales analyses, eye-tracking, surveys, and qualitative content studies—creates differing sensitivities to short-term attentional processes versus long-term attitudinal change. Experiments often isolate cognitive mechanisms such as transportation and mental imagery under controlled conditions, whereas field and qualitative approaches capture broader socio-cultural signaling and relational outcomes [25]. Contextually, platform affordances and ecosystem norms moderate narrative effectiveness. Community-oriented, high-context platforms such as Red Note or Taobao tend to amplify emotionally framed and relational narratives through group validation, while Western, product-centric platforms like Amazon Live place importance on expertise and explicit informational cues that encourage analytic processing [26]. Product category and consumer involvement add further boundary conditions: cosmetics with immediate, visible effects (e.g., makeup demonstrations) are especially responsive to vivid imagery and experiential narratives, whereas treatment-oriented products (e.g., anti-aging serums) demand evidence-based appeals to mitigate perceived risk [27].

Theoretically, divergent definitions of “narrative” and “transportation” contribute to inconsistent findings. Some scholars conceptualize narrative mainly in terms of sensory or imagistic cues, consistent with the Extended Transportation-Imagery Model, while others emphasize social constructs such as parasocial interaction, authenticity, and community language as parallel or mediating mechanisms [28]. Cultural psychology adds another layer of complexity: cultural schemas such as collectivism versus individualism or high- versus low-context communication shape baseline expectations about sincerity, authority, and social proof, thereby altering how identical narrative stimuli are

cognitively and affectively processed [29][30].

In sum, contemporary research converges on the proposition that digital multimedia narratives exert persuasive power through cognitive-affective immersion, yet it concurrently reveals culturally contingent variability in which narrative persuasion practices are most effective. Resolving these tensions requires integrative, multimethod cross-cultural designs that combine experimental manipulations of narrative form, fine-grained multimodal content analyses, and field measures of behavior across platform ecologies—approaches that can disentangle universal cognitive mechanisms from culturally specific interpretive processes and thereby generate prescriptive insights for culturally adaptive multimedia storytelling.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design informed by the principles of thematic analysis to examine narrative strategies in cross-cultural livestreaming contexts. The primary objective was to investigate how cosmetics livestreamers in China and the United States deploy distinct narrative practices to engage audiences, stimulate trust, and drive purchase intentions. The focus on two major platforms, Red Note, a community-oriented Chinese platform and Amazon a product-centric Western platform, allowed for a comparative analysis that highlights cultural differences in narrative construction, persuasion strategies, communicative styles, and transactional framing.

The study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, emphasizing meaning-making within livestreaming discourse rather than attempting to generalize findings through statistical inference. This approach aligns with recent calls in digital marketing and cross-cultural communication research to capture the richness of communicative performance, symbolic value, and narrative framing within specific socio-technical ecosystems. By concentrating on cosmetics livestreams, the research targets a product category that combines hedonic and functional attributes, thus offering a fertile ground for examining both affective and informational appeals in digital storytelling.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected from two major livestreaming platforms that represent contrasting cultural and commercial logics: Red Note and Amazon Live. On each platform, the top 10 cosmetics streamers were identified using follower counts, engagement metrics (likes, comments, and shares), and sales rankings over the past six months, from March to September, 2025. From each streamer, three representative livestream sessions were selected, resulting in a total of 30 videos per platform and 60 videos overall. This sampling strategy ensured both breadth and depth, covering a range of narrative practices while maintaining comparability across contexts.

All videos were transcribed verbatim in their original language, with Chinese transcripts subsequently translated into English by bilingual researchers to facilitate cross-case analysis. The transcripts were complemented by field notes on

visual and paralinguistic cues, including tone, gesture, product demonstration styles, and aesthetic presentation, as these elements contribute significantly to narrative meaning in livestream commerce. The final corpus consisted of over 87,000 words of textual data, supplemented by screenshots and descriptive annotations.

To preserve ecological validity, no artificial prompts or interventions were introduced; all sessions reflected naturally occurring livestreaming interactions. Ethical considerations were observed by anonymizing streamer identities and excluding any content that could compromise personal privacy. The study adheres to institutional ethical guidelines for digital research, recognizing the semi-public nature of livestreaming data while ensuring responsible handling of textual and visual materials.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. AntConc software was used to assist with coding, retrieval, and theme organization. Coding was conducted iteratively, with both inductive and deductive strategies: deductively guided by established narrative and persuasion theories, and inductively attentive to emergent cultural nuances in the data.

Through this process, ten sub-themes were initially identified, which were subsequently consolidated into four overarching thematic categories to capture the core dimensions of cross-cultural livestream narratives: 1) narrative construction, 2) persuasive strategies, 3) communication style and 4) transactional framing (See Table 1).

Table 1: Data Analysis Result

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	RC	AC
Narrative Construction	Narrative Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Self-use 	141	42
	Narrative Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutorial Testimonial 	99	69
	Narrative Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intimate Neutral 	12	90
Narrative Persuasion	Persuasive Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional Rational 	276	81
	Emotional Trigger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxiety Reassurance 	0	78
	Social Proof	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Data& Fact 	174	90
Communicative Style	Effect Demo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxiety Reassurance 	42	108
	Aesthetic Ideal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Data& Fact 	108	9
Transactional Framing	CTA Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong Low 	6	54
	Price framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Pro Subtle Pro 	144	12
			84	9
			2	24

Notes: RC and AC denote Red Note Counts and Amazon Counts respectively; the numbers denote the frequency of the codes.

To ensure analytical rigor, two researchers independently coded 20% of the data, achieving high intercoder reliability (Cohen's kappa = 0.82). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and the final coding framework was applied to the entire dataset. Triangulation across platforms and narrative dimensions further enhanced the validity of interpretations.

The thematic analysis produced a cross-cultural comparative framework that highlights how narrative practices in cosmetics livestream are shaped by persuasive strategies, cultural communication norms, and audience expectation. Underpinned by both narrative persuasion theory and cross-cultural communication research, this study provides a robust methodological foundation for understanding the evolving dynamics of digital storytelling in global e-commerce.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Narrative Construction

The analysis of livestream narratives across Red Note and Amazon reveals distinct patterns in how streamers construct and deliver their content, reflecting deeper cultural values and communication norms. Using a qualitative thematic approach, we examined the narrative role, structure, and tone, highlighting the nuanced ways that storytelling strategies are shaped by country-specific culture and audience expectations.

4.1.1 Narrative Role

A prominent difference emerges in the dominant narrative roles adopted on the two platforms, which can be interpreted through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimension of power distance. On Red Note, the "Expert" role overwhelmingly prevails, with 141 instances across 30 livestreams. This aligns with China's relatively high power distance culture, where hierarchical relationships are accepted, and audiences often defer to perceived experts. For instance, one streamer asserts, *"Once applied, it makes your eyes look stunning on camera, enlarging them by 2–3 times"*, establishing a confident, authoritative claim. Detailed tutorial

instructions also position the streamer as an expert guide whose judgment audiences are expected to trust.

In contrast, Amazon streamers predominantly adopted a “Self-use” narrative role, with 114 counts, emphasizing peer-like experience and personal authenticity, consistent with the low power distance culture prevalent in the United States. Narratives foreground lived experience rather than formal expertise: “*I actually purchase this mascara a few months ago, and I use it all the time*” and “*I like to actually cocktail my mascaras*”. Streamers actively involve audiences in conversational interaction, positioning themselves as equals rather than authorities. In low power distance contexts, credibility is constructed through relatability, transparency, and mutual participation, rather than hierarchical expertise.

Thus, narrative roles in livestream commerce are culturally embedded: Red Note reflects high power distance through authoritative expertise, while Amazon embodies low power distance through experiential sharing and equality.

4.1.2 Narrative Structure

From the perspective of perceived persuasion intent, Red Note and Amazon livestreams construct narratives in culturally distinctive ways. On Red Note, the dominant structure is Tutorial Storytelling (99 instances), where persuasion is embedded within a systematic, step-by-step logic. Streamers present problems “*after base makeup, the face may look pale, wide, or dull*”, immediately positioning their product as the solution. The narrative proceeds like a lesson: how to apply shades, when to use them, and what effects to expect. Persuasion here is indirect but authoritative, framed as expert instruction rather than overt sales pressure. The promotional offers — “*Alright, so usually when you grab two blushes, the total would be 79.9. But today... you can get the second one for just 10 dollars!*”, which are seamlessly woven into the tutorial, lowering resistance by presenting discounts as part of the learning process.

Amazon livestreams, in contrast, favor a Testimonial Flow (90 instances), where persuasion is perceived as authentic sharing. Streamers highlight personal enthusiasm — “*I love the Knicks lip liners... they are my absolute favorite*” — and validate products with anecdotes and social proof: “*everyone goes crazy for these on TikTok*”. By swatching colors live and connecting them to personal use “*I’m actually wearing Ever right now*”, the persuasion intent appears spontaneous, experiential, and thus less intrusive. Discounts and best-seller labels (“*viral bestselling colors... all three for \$15*”) are framed as casual tips rather than scripted promotions.

In short, Red Note’s structured tutorial reduces skepticism by disguising persuasion as expert guidance, consistent with high-context cultural expectations. Amazon’s testimonial narratives lower perceived intent through personal authenticity and informal sharing, aligning with low-context, consumer-driven engagement practices.

4.1.3 Narrative Tone

Narrative tone reflects deeper cultural orientations toward collectivism and individualism. On Red Note, the tone is

overwhelmingly intimate (276 instances, with no neutral cases), consistent with a collectivist context where trust is built through emotional closeness and group belonging. Streamers frequently address audiences as “sisters” or “darlings”, emphasizing shared identity. For example, one host explained, “*As we age, the philtrum lengthens, lips thin, and lines deepen*,” then recommended, “*Shade 23 restores fullness with collagen, giving a painless plumping effect*.” Such guidance is framed as collective care: “sisters, you must know that only healthy lips can create a beautiful makeup effect”. Even drawbacks — “*It may fade slightly, but with four layers of plant essence, it remains gentle, safe for pregnant women*” — are softened in relational terms. This intimacy transforms product use into a shared journey, reinforcing collectivist values of harmony and trust.

By contrast, Amazon livestreams show a more balanced mix of intimacy (81 counts) and neutrality (78 counts), aligning with individualist norms that prize personal autonomy. Streamers may share personal anecdotes: “*I’ve been in the pool all day... this look should feel glowy, almost sweaty but in a good way*”, but they also maintain neutrality, offering practical advice: “*Leave the eye masks for ten minutes, but not longer, or they may draw out moisture*.” Here, persuasion relies less on collective belonging and more on empowering individuals with transparent, fact-based knowledge to support independent decision-making.

To wrap up for this section, the findings indicate that Red Note livestreams highlight expert authority, tutorial-based persuasion, and intimate group-oriented tones, reflecting high power distance and collectivist culture. Conversely, Amazon streamers rely on self-use testimonials, authentic sharing, and a balance of intimacy and neutrality, aligning with low power distance and individualist cultural values in consumer engagement.

4.2 Persuasive Strategies

The findings on persuasive strategies reveal striking cultural contrasts in how Red Note and Amazon livestreamers appeal to audiences. From narrative persuasion to social proof, the data show different orientations toward perceived persuasive intent, reflecting broader cultural values of collectivism and individualism.

4.2.1 Persuasive Appeal

Red Note livestreams relied predominantly on emotional appeal (174 instances), while rational appeals were relatively limited (42 instances). Streamers frequently drew on affective triggers such as beauty-related anxiety: “*people asked me how my makeup still looks flawless after a long workday*”, which not only highlighted a common insecurity but also positioned the streamer as the solution provider. This technique reflects a high-context communication style, where emotions and shared concerns become persuasive anchors. The strong use of emotional appeals suggests a lower perceived persuasive intent: persuasion is embedded in empathetic storytelling rather than overt selling.

Unlike Red Note, Amazon livestreamers leaned more toward rational appeal (108 instances), though emotional appeals

were still significant (90). Product demonstrations were grounded in functional logic and transparency: *“BB cream like this is definitely not going to give you the fullest coverage possible, but I do think... this is much, much fuller coverage than other similar bb creams.”* Here persuasion is framed as factual comparison and reasoned assessment. This is in line with low-context, individualist cultures that value explicit, rational justification and where persuasive intent is expected and accepted. Viewers perceive persuasion as straightforward and credible precisely because it is openly acknowledged.

4.2.2 Emotional Triggers

Emotional triggers also reflect cultural nuances. On Red Note, anxiety was a dominant trigger (108), often amplified by references to stressful contexts like high-definition cameras at work or social events. For example, *“the cameras are terrifyingly sharp, so foundation must be flawless”*. Such framing leverages social anxiety as a collective pressure, while reassurance (81 instances) is offered through product recommendations that promise to resolve these shared worries. This pattern resonates with collectivist cultures, where social evaluation carries significant weight, and persuasion often works by acknowledging group-based fears before restoring confidence.

By contrast, Amazon livestreams employed reassurance exclusively (75), avoiding anxiety triggers altogether. For instance, *“This has been one of the only products that remains consistent... I haven’t noticed any changes in the formula.”* Rather than evoking fear of imperfection, the persuasive logic rests on calming viewers, providing reliability, and minimizing risk. This reflects individualist values where the consumer is persuaded not through shared social pressure but through assurance that the product supports personal autonomy and consistent self-expression.

4.2.3 Social Proof

The role of social proof highlights further cultural divergence. Red Note livestreams overwhelmingly favored group reference (99 instances) over data and ratings (12). Streamers emphasized communal experience and peer endorsement, as in: *“for people like me, who aren’t skilled, this is very practical”*. By categorizing audiences into relatable groups (*“newbies,” “office workers,” “students”*), streamers reinforce belongingness and mutual identification. This strategy mirrors collectivist orientations, where persuasion often emerges from group validation and conformity with shared norms.

On Amazon, however, data and ratings (45) were more common than group references (30). Streamers referred to quantified feedback and product consistency: *“I keep repurchasing... I haven’t noticed any kind of changes in the formula.”* Here, social proof is mediated through statistical credibility and personal testimony rather than group identity. Such emphasis reflects individualist cultures, where decisions are legitimized by objective evidence and personal choice rather than communal consensus.

Taken together, cross-cultural comparison reveals that persuasive strategies in livestream commerce are deeply

embedded in cultural communication patterns. Red Note persuasion thrives on collective emotions and group belonging, while Amazon persuasion centers on rational logic and individual trust in data and self-use testimony. These findings underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity in narrative persuasion: what reassures and convinces in one cultural setting may be ineffective, or even counterproductive in another.

4.3 Communicative Style

The communicative style of livestream commerce reveals distinct cultural orientations in how product effects and beauty ideals are conveyed. The data highlight two central dimensions: effect demonstration and aesthetic ideals. These differences can be explained through cross-cultural theories of power distance, collectivism, and individualism, and they are evident in both the rhetoric and delivery of Red Note and Amazon livestreams.

4.3.1 Effect Demonstration

The data show that Red Note relied heavily on expert authority to demonstrate product efficacy (84 instances), while Amazon streamers emphasized experience-sharing authenticity (102 instances). This divergence reflects cultural differences in power distance.

In high power distance contexts like China, expertise is a legitimate source of persuasion. Streamers frequently invoke the authority of makeup artists or technical product knowledge. For example, one Red Note host began: *“Hello everyone, today I’m sharing a treasure domestic foundation, recommended to me by my makeup teacher”*. This authoritative framing not only legitimizes the product but also reproduces hierarchical trust, where knowledge is passed from experts to ordinary users. Similarly, detailed technical demonstrations, such as *“Pat, pat, pat... See, it blends perfectly even in areas like the sides of the nose that are especially prone to cakey makeup”*, showcase mastery and imply that the streamer holds insider techniques inaccessible to novices. Presumably, this communicative style fit in high-power-distance orientation where audiences expect and value expert-led instruction, perceiving the authority figure as a trusted guide.

In comparison, Amazon livestreams reflect low power distance cultures, where persuasion is grounded in authenticity, reliability, and shared personal experience rather than hierarchical authority. One streamer remarked, *“If you want light makeup, you can do a light layer, but if you want to build on it, this is gonna be payoff.”* Another explained, *“I feel like the heat really helps to press the product into the skin, so I use my fingers.”* These statements rely on subjective experience rather than professional expertise, positioning the streamer as a peer rather than an authority. Such communicative style lowers the social distance between streamer and viewer, resonating with individualist expectations of equality and autonomy in consumer decision-making.

4.3.2 Aesthetic Ideal

The second major dimension concerns the beauty ideals embedded in the narrative. Red Note overwhelmingly promoted perfected correction (108 instances), while Amazon emphasized natural enhancement (54 instances). These differences map onto cultural orientations toward collectivism and individualism.

On Red Note, beauty ideals are defined by a collective standard of flawless correction. Streamers frequently emphasized “flawless, creamy-skin effect” or stressed that “*facial smoothness must be achieved to look youthful*”. The emphasis on “*appearing younger*” and “*visual correction*” reflects a cultural orientation where conformity to socially endorsed ideals of youthfulness and perfection is a shared aspiration. Viewers are persuaded not only to purchase a product but also to conform themselves with a collectively validated aesthetic order. In collectivist contexts, makeup functions less as a tool for self-expression and more as a means of social adaptation, meeting the expectations of peers, workplaces, or broader society.

By contrast, Amazon livestreams encouraged natural enhancement as the dominant aesthetic. Streamers often presented products as versatile tools for everyday authenticity, describing them as “*pretty great for every day*” or stressing that makeup can be “*a light layer*” or “*buildable*” depending on individual preference. This reflects individualist cultures, where beauty is framed as personal choice and authenticity, rather than flawless conformity, is the highest value. Rather than striving toward a perfect youthful appearance, the communicative style positions products as enablers of individual comfort, flexibility, and self-expression.

The contrast is particularly visible in two examples. On Red Note, a streamer instructed: “*If you have blemishes or dullness, layering a few times will cover almost everything*”. The narrative assumes that imperfections must be fully corrected to meet collective standards of beauty. On Amazon, however, a host explained: “*If you want light makeup, you can do a light layer, but if you want to build on it, this is gonna be payoff*.” Here, imperfection is not treated as a flaw to be erased but as an individual condition that can be embraced or adjusted based on personal preference.

Overall, the communicative style of livestream commerce reflects deep cultural scripts. Red Note’s authority-driven effect demonstrations and perfected beauty ideals align with high power distance and collectivist orientations, where persuasion rests on expert authority and conformity to shared standards. Amazon’s authenticity-driven demonstrations and natural enhancement ideals align with low power distance and individualist orientations, where persuasion emphasizes peer-like vibe and individual choice. Recognizing these cultural dynamics is essential for understanding how livestream narratives persuade across markets, and for designing communication strategies that resonate with diverse audiences.

4.4 Transactional Framing

Transactional framing captures the final push toward purchase in livestream commerce, where cultural values significantly shape the use of calls to action (CTAs) and price framing

strategies. A comparison of Red Note and Amazon data reveals contrasting approaches: Red Note employs high-intensity, urgent CTAs and direct discount framing, while Amazon favors softer CTAs and more subtle price positioning. These divergences reflect broader cultural orientations toward communication style, persuasion, and consumer psychology.

4.4.1 CTA Intensity

On Red Note, CTAs were overwhelmingly Strong (144 counts) compared to Low (6 counts). The transcripts reveal a discourse saturated with urgency, repetition, and command. Examples include: “*Hurry up and buy today*.” “*If you want it, place the order now*.” “*Stock is running low*.” “*5-4-3-2-1, link number one has refreshed*.” Such high-pressure rhetoric exemplifies what Hofstede terms a high-context, high power distance persuasion style. In collectivist and hierarchical cultures like China, streamers can assume an authoritative stance, issuing direct imperatives to viewers. The repetition of commands like “go buy” and the frequent invocation of countdowns or scarcity triggers create a performative urgency. The audience is positioned as a group that must act collectively and instantly, with the streamer as the authoritative coordinator of this moment.

However, Amazon livestreams featured predominantly Low intensity CTAs (51 counts) compared to only 12 Strong CTAs. Amazon hosts often relied on softer invitations: “*Some more exciting makeup finds for you guys today*...” “*This is the makeup for you*.” “*If you claim the yellow button, you’re going to get the percentage off*.” Here, the tone is suggestive rather than commanding, framing the purchase as a choice aligned with the viewer’s preferences. This aligns with low power distance and individualist cultures, where consumers resist overt pressure and prefer subtle encouragement. The phrasing — “claim the yellow button” — provides clear guidance but avoids imperatives, creating a sense of autonomy. Instead of scarcity-driven urgency, Amazon’s communicative style emphasizes exploration, lifestyle fit, and personal choice, resonating with cultural norms of self-directed consumption.

4.4.2 Price Framing

Price presentation also reveals stark cultural contrasts. On Red Note, Direct discount framing dominated (84 counts), while Subtle discount appeared only 2 times. Streamers repeatedly highlighted explicit before-and-after price reductions and bundled deals: “*Normally one box sells for 109, today’s flash sale is 79*.” “*Buy for 49.9 and get 5 items, 59.9 gets you 6*.” “*Buy one, get one free—order early and enjoy*.” The directness of these claims reflects a transactional and value-maximization orientation, common in collectivist settings where overt price advantages foster trust and group conformity. Price is framed as an objective reason to act immediately, reinforced by additional promotions such as free gifts (“*As an exclusive bonus, you’ll also get two mini makeup puffs!*”) and assurances of lowest prices (“*And don’t worry about future sales—we guarantee our price for 618, Double 11, and Double 12. If the price drops, we’ve got you covered with a full price difference refund!*”). This discursive style reduces ambiguity, providing consumers with a clear and

urgent justification to purchase.

On Amazon, however, Subtle discount framing was more prevalent (24 counts), with Direct discounts appearing less frequently (9 counts). Hosts framed price as part of the product's overall value, balancing affordability with quality: *"I love their affordability as well as their pigmentation and quality."* *"Affordable \$7 for concealer—that's amazing."* *"If you claim the yellow button, you're going to get the percentage off of every color."* Rather than emphasizing dramatic before-and-after pricing, Amazon streamers positioned affordability as one attribute among others, such as design, packaging, or usability. Discounts were often embedded in casual conversation, not foregrounded as the core persuasive appeal. This reflects an individualist cultural orientation, where overt price pressure may appear pushy or manipulative. Instead, subtle framing allows consumers to feel they are making an independent, informed choice, guided but not commanded by the host.

To sum up, transactional framing in livestream commerce reveals how deeply cultural contexts shape marketing strategies. Red Note's intense CTAs and direct discounts create a sense of collective urgency, authority, and value-maximization, while Amazon's softer CTAs and subtle price framing emphasize autonomy, authenticity, and balanced evaluation. Recognizing these differences is vital for global e-commerce brands, as effective transactional strategies must resonate not only with universal consumer desires but also with culturally specific expectations of how persuasion should be performed.

5. Conclusion

This study is geared toward exploring how livestream commerce narratives are constructed across two major platforms, Red Note in China and Amazon in the United States, and how these narratives reflect and reproduce livestreamers' cultural practices. Against the backdrop of increasing global relevance of livestreaming as a persuasive marketing tool, this research examined the interplay of culture and livestream storytelling in a detailed fashion.

The findings provide a clear answer. Red Note livestreams are characterized by expert authority, tutorial-based persuasion, and an intimate, group-oriented tone, reflecting high power distance and collectivist norms. By contrast, Amazon livestreams emphasize self-use testimonials, authentic sharing, and a balanced tone of intimacy and neutrality, aligning with low power distance and individualist values. Together, these findings highlight that livestream persuasion strategies are not universal but rather deeply embedded within culturally specific communication patterns. What inspires trust in one cultural setting—such as authority and collective belonging in China—may be ineffective or even counterproductive in another, where individual autonomy and peer authenticity take precedence.

The current study could advance existing research in three key ways. First, while prior scholarship has examined cultural differences in advertising and online consumer behavior, relatively little attention has been paid to livestream commerce as a site of cross-cultural persuasion. By

systematically comparing narrative roles, structures, and tones across platforms, this study addresses this gap and provides empirical evidence that livestream storytelling is shaped not only by platform affordances but also by national cultural scripts. Second, the research extends the application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Hall's high/low-context framework to the emergent field of livestream commerce, offering fresh insights into how these theories remain relevant in digital marketing contexts. Third, the findings contribute to the growing literature on narrative persuasion by showing how narrative credibility, trust, and authenticity are differently constructed across cultures.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The data were limited to two platforms and a specific product category (cosmetics), which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the qualitative thematic analysis, while rich in depth, does not capture the full range of consumer responses or purchasing behaviors, which future research could examine through mixed methods or experimental designs. Another limitation lies in the rapidly evolving nature of livestream platforms; strategies that are effective today may quickly adapt as audience expectations shift.

Looking forward, future research could expand cross-cultural comparisons by including additional platforms and regions, exploring gendered dynamics in narrative persuasion, or integrating audience reception studies to better understand how consumers interpret and respond to different narrative strategies. Further, longitudinal studies could shed light on how cultural values and persuasive practices co-evolve in digital marketplaces.

In conclusion, this study lays stress on the significance of cultural sensitivity in designing livestream commerce strategies. By recognizing how cultural orientations shape narrative persuasion, marketers and educators alike can better tailor communication to resonate authentically with diverse global audiences.

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