



Word of Mouth in Storytelling Rintik Sedu on Instagram Audience Interaction

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Abstract. This study examines how storytelling on Rintik Sedu, a popular poetic and narrative emotional Instagram account, generates natural Word of Mouth (WOM) and builds trust among its audience. In today's digital era, Word of Mouth is highly influential since peer recommendations are seen as more genuine than brand-driven advertising. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with five followers aged 19–24 years old who have engaged with the account for over three years. Narrative Transportation Theory was applied to learn how emotional immersion in stories encourages sharing and behavior recommendation. The findings show that followers naturally share content by tagging friends, reposting storytelling content, recommending books, also initiating discussions on Rintik Sedu's podcasts and movie. Because these tactics are based on genuine emotional connections rather than persuasive marketing, they are trusted. The study concludes that storytelling fosters sustained engagement and turns audiences into reliable advocates who spread Rintik Sedu's message through genuine Word of Mouth. This illustrates the enduring value of narrative-driven communication in fostering influence and trust in today's online landscape. However, this research is limited to a small sample of young adult Instagram users, thus further studies could expand to larger and more diverse audiences across different platforms to deepen the understanding of narrative-driven Word of Mouth.

Keywords: Word of Mouth, Storytelling, Audience Interaction, Qualitative, Instagram.

1 Introduction

Storytelling has become an influential communication approach on Instagram, as the platform enables users to convey messages through emotional narratives and interactive content. Instagram facilitates not only visual expression but also interpersonal communication that encourages audiences to respond, share, and recommend content within their social networks. Perwithasari and Kurniawan (2022) explain that Instagram functions as a social interaction space where user-generated communication naturally develops into Word of Mouth (WOM), making messages more credible because they are rooted in personal experience rather than formal promotion.

Emotional storytelling plays a critical role in strengthening audience engagement on Instagram. Content that evokes feelings and personal reflection tends to create deeper emotional bonds between creators and audiences. Aurellia et al. (2024) emphasize that storytelling on Instagram significantly increases audience engagement, as emotional narratives encourage repeated viewing, interaction, and sustained attention. This emotional involvement makes storytelling content more memorable and meaningful for audiences.

Rintik Sedu, an Instagram account managed by Nadhifa Allya Tsana, exemplifies the use of emotional storytelling through poetic language and reflective narratives about love, loss, and personal growth. Such content resonates strongly with young audiences who seek relatability and emotional authenticity. Zain and Dwivayani (2024) argue that Instagram is widely used by Generation Z as a medium for emotional expression and identity construction, making narrative-based accounts like Rintik Sedu highly effective in fostering emotional connections and audience loyalty.

The emotional connection formed through storytelling often leads audiences to share content voluntarily, creating organic Word of Mouth communication. WOM that emerges from emotional engagement is perceived as more trustworthy because it originates from genuine audience experiences. Hildayanti and Satriyani (2022) state that WOM is a powerful promotional mechanism precisely because it is driven by voluntary consumer communication based on satisfaction and emotional attachment, rather than persuasive intent.

Recent studies also highlight the growing importance of electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Instagram in shaping audience attitudes and behavioral intentions. Nabilah, Permatasari, and Utamaningsih (2024) demonstrate that e-WOM on Instagram significantly influences audience interest and perception because recommendations shared by peers are considered more reliable than brand-generated messages. This indicates that emotionally engaging storytelling can transform audiences into active advocates who spread content organically.

Research Question: How does audience engagement with Rintik Sedu's storytelling on Instagram lead to Word of Mouth (WOM) communication?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Digital Storytelling on Instagram

Digital storytelling on Instagram refers to the use of narrative structures, emotional language, and visual elements to convey meaningful messages and personal experiences. Instagram's features allow stories to be delivered in short yet emotionally impactful formats that encourage audience interaction. Aurellia et al. (2024) explain that storytelling on Instagram significantly increases audience engagement because narratives create emotional continuity, prompting users to repeatedly view, interact with, and internalize the content.

Emotional narratives are particularly effective on Instagram because audiences tend to seek authenticity and relatability. Zain and Dwivayani (2024) argue that Instagram functions as a medium of emotional expression construction, and identity especially

among Generation Z. Through storytelling, content creators can build emotional proximity with audiences, making narratives feel personal and relevant, which strengthens audience attachment and loyalty.

2.2 Emotional Engagement and Audience Interaction

Emotional engagement represents the extent to which audiences feel emotionally connected to content and creators. Content that evokes empathy, reflection, or personal relevance encourages users to actively interact rather than passively consume information. Hildayanti and Satriyani (2022) state that emotional involvement is a key driver of voluntary audience behavior, including sharing experiences and recommending content to others.

On Instagram, emotional engagement is reflected in audience actions such as commenting, reposting, tagging friends, and discussing content beyond the platform. Perwithasari and Kurniawan (2022) highlight that interaction-based engagement on Instagram facilitates interpersonal communication among users, which becomes the foundation for organic Word of Mouth communication rooted in shared emotional experiences.

2.3 Narrative Transportation Theory in Social Media Contexts

Narrative Transportation Theory explains how individuals become mentally and emotionally immersed in a story, leading to stronger emotional responses and behavioral influence. When audiences are transported into a narrative, they experience reduced resistance and increased emotional identification with the message. Aurellia et al. (2024) demonstrate that storytelling content on Instagram enhances audience immersion, which directly influences engagement behaviors such as repeated viewing and content sharing.

In social media environments, narrative transportation occurs resonate with when stories audiences' personal experiences and emotions. Lestari and Gunawan (2021) emphasize that emotionally immersive content strengthens audience perception and sharing intention, suggesting that narrative transportation plays an important role in transforming emotional engagement into communicative actions such as recommending and discussing content.

2.4 Word of Mouth (WOM) in Social Media Narratives

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Instagram further amplifies the reach of storytelling content. Nabilah, Permatasari, and Utamaningsih (2024) found that e WOM significantly influences audience interest and perception, as peer recommendations are considered more reliable than brand-generated messages. This indicates that emotional storytelling can transform engaged audiences into active advocates who spread narratives organically within their social networks.

3 Research Method

This study employs qualitative research methods to examine how audience engagement with Rintik Sedu's storytelling on Instagram generates Word of Mouth communication. Using a constructivist paradigm to explore the subjective meanings and diverse perceptions of followers regarding the content (Creswell, 2020; Lexy Moelong, 2021). Data collection involves primary methods, such as interviews, and secondary methods, like document studies, with the population consisting of @rintiksedu Instagram followers and a purposive sampling technique based on inclusion criteria (active followers, >18 years old, experienced in Word of Mouth behavior, and willing to be informants) and exclusion criteria (Sugiyono, 2023). The research process includes creating an outline, drafting a proposal, determining research objects and source criteria, conducting interviews, collecting and classifying data based on relevant theories, processing data for discussion, and drawing conclusions (Sujarweni, 2020). Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction (simplifying and focusing raw data), data presentation (organizing data into descriptive narratives or matrices), and conclusion drawing with verification to ensure validity by identifying patterns and confirming findings relevant to the research focus.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Results

Audience Discovery and Engagement Patterns. The results show that all informants initially discovered Rintik Sedu through digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Wattpad, with Instagram becoming the main platform for sustained interaction. Informants reported engaging with the account frequently, ranging from daily visits to several times per week, particularly during moments of emotional reflection. This pattern is consistent with Zain and Dwivayani (2024), who note that Instagram is commonly used by young audiences as a medium for emotional expression and self-representation, encouraging repeated and intentional engagement with emotionally relevant content.

Informants emphasized that their engagement was driven by emotional needs rather than entertainment alone. They actively sought Rintik Sedu's content when experiencing sadness, nostalgia, or self-reflection. According to Perwithasari and Kurniawan (2022), such intentional engagement reflects a deeper emotional connection, as Instagram users tend to interact more frequently with content that resonates with their personal experiences and emotional states.

Emotional Resonance of Storytelling Content. All informants described Rintik Sedu's storytelling as emotionally relatable and reflective of real-life experiences. The poetic language and narrative style were perceived as comforting and meaningful, enabling audiences to feel emotionally understood. Aurellia et al. (2024) explain that storytelling emotional content resonance by enhances allowing audiences to identify with narratives, making the content feel personal and emotionally impactful.

Informants also highlighted the authenticity of the narratives, stating that the stories felt sincere rather than exaggerated or promotional. This perception of authenticity strengthened emotional trust toward the content and the creator. Hildayanti and Satriyani (2022) argue that emotional authenticity is a key factor in sustaining audience engagement, as users are more likely to connect with narratives they perceive as genuine.

Voluntary Sharing and Word of Mouth Behavior. The findings indicate that informants frequently shared Rintik Sedu's content through Instagram Stories, direct messages, and tagging friends. This sharing behavior was voluntary and emotionally motivated, often occurring when a post reflected a friend's situation or personal feelings that informants found difficult to express directly. Perwithasari and Kurniawan (2022) explain that Instagram facilitates interpersonal communication through content sharing, enabling users to convey emotions and messages indirectly.

Importantly, informants did not view their sharing behavior as promotional. Instead, sharing functioned as an extension of emotional expression and social connection. Nabilah, Permatasari, and Utamaningsih (2024) note that electronic Word of Mouth is most influential when it emerges from genuine emotional experience, as such communication is perceived as more credible and trustworthy by peers.

Influence on Product Consumption and Creative Expression. Beyond sharing posts, informants reported recommending Rintik Sedu's books, films, and podcasts to friends and family members. Some informants lent books, discussed narratives offline, or watched adaptations together with peers. This finding aligns with Lestari and Gunawan (2021), who argue that emotionally engaging social media content can influence broader behavioral outcomes, including consumption and recommendation behaviors.

Several informants also mentioned that Rintik Sedu's storytelling inspired them to write reflective texts or create similar quotes. This indicates that engagement extended beyond consumption to creative participation. Zain and Dwivayani (2024) suggest that narrative-based Instagram content often stimulates self-expression and creative imitation, reinforcing emotional bonds between audiences and content creators.

4.2 Results



Fig. 1. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model in this study outlines a step-by-step process illustrating how storytelling on Instagram leads to the emergence of organic Word of Mouth. Emotional storytelling initiates audience involvement by drawing individuals into a state of narrative transportation, where emotional and cognitive engagement with the story occurs. This immersive experience encourages active audience engagement, including emotional interaction, attachment, and content sharing. Over time, sustained engagement develops trust and motivates audiences to voluntarily share, recommend, and discuss content, resulting in organic Word of Mouth driven by personal meaning rather than deliberate promotional influence.

Emotional Storytelling and Narrative Transportation. The findings demonstrate that emotional storytelling serves as the primary mechanism that draws audiences into Rintik Sedu's narrative content. Informants' emotional immersion reflects the process of transportation, individuals where become mentally and emotionally absorbed in a story. Aurellia et al. (2024) emphasize that storytelling on Instagram enhances audience immersion, which strengthens emotional attachment and increases engagement intensity.

This narrative transportation reduces psychological distance between audiences and content, making stories feel personally relevant. Lestari and Gunawan (2021) argue that emotionally immersive content increases trust and emotional closeness, which are essential for transforming engagement into meaningful communicative behavior such as sharing and recommending content.

Audience Engagement as a Mediating Process. Audience engagement emerged as a mediating factor that connects emotional immersion with Word of Mouth behavior. Engagement manifested not only in visible interactions such as likes and comments, but also in repeated visits, emotional reflection, and interpersonal sharing. Perwithasari and Kurniawan (2022) explain that engagement on Instagram facilitates social interaction, allowing personal emotions to be translated into communicative actions within social networks.

These engagement behaviors enable narratives to circulate beyond the original platform context. Hildayanti and Satriyani (2022) state that interaction-based engagement strengthens WOM because messages are embedded within interpersonal relationships, making them more persuasive and socially meaningful.

Organic Word of Mouth and Trust Formation. The Word of Mouth observed in this study was organic and non-incentivized, driven by emotional trust rather than promotional intent. Informants shared content because they believed in its emotional relevance and authenticity. Nabilah et al. (2024) argue that emotionally driven e-WOM is perceived as more credible, as it reflects genuine personal endorsement rather than marketing persuasion.

This trust-based WOM enhances the sustainability of narrative-driven communication. Lestari and Gunawan (2021) emphasize that sustained emotional engagement leads to long-term loyalty and advocacy, highlighting the strategic value of emotional storytelling in digital communication contexts.

Practical Implications for Content Creators and Brand Marketer. The findings demonstrate that emotional authenticity functions as a central strategy for content creators in sustaining audience engagement and encouraging organic Word of Mouth. Storytelling that reflects everyday emotional experiences enables audiences to perceive narratives as personally relevant and emotionally trustworthy. Aurellia et al. (2024) state that emotionally immersive storytelling increases audience attachment and repeated interaction, which strengthens the likelihood of voluntary sharing within personal social networks.

The implications for brand marketers highlight the strategic value of narrative driven communication over explicit promotional messaging. Content that story-based emphasizes human experiences and emotional resonance allows brands to build trust without triggering audience resistance to persuasion. Nabilah, Permatasari, and Utamaningsih (2024) explain that electronic Word of Mouth becomes more influential when audiences perceive messages as genuine expressions rather than commercial persuasion, reinforcing the effectiveness of emotional storytelling in digital branding contexts.

Collaborative storytelling between brands and content creators also emerges as a relevant implication. Narrative formats that align brand values with emotionally meaningful themes, such as self-reflection or personal growth, encourage audiences to engage and recommend content voluntarily. Lestari and Gunawan (2021) argue that emotionally driven narratives strengthen brand image and increase recommendation behavior because messages are embedded within personal emotional experiences rather than transactional communication.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that emotional storytelling on Instagram plays a central role in generating organic Word of Mouth through audience immersion engagement. Rintik Sedu's poetic and emotionally charged narratives encourage audiences to connect personally with the content, transforming storytelling into an emotional experience rather than mere information consumption. This emotional connection becomes the foundation for sustained interaction and voluntary communication among audiences.

The findings show that emotional immersion leads audiences to engage actively with the content through repeated viewing, liking, commenting, and sharing. Engagement does not occur incidentally but emerges from intentional and emotionally driven interaction. When audiences feel that narratives reflect their own experiences and emotions, they are more likely to internalize the message and extend it beyond the platform through interpersonal communication.

Furthermore, this study reveals that Word of Mouth related to Rintik Sedu emerges organically without explicit promotional cues. Audiences share recommend books, films, and podcasts, and discuss narratives both online and offline as expressions of emotional relevance and trust. Such behavior demonstrates that emotional storytelling can transform audiences into voluntary advocates who disseminate messages within their social circles based on genuine emotional attachment. This research highlights the importance of emotional storytelling as a strategic communication approach in digital environments. By fostering emotional immersion and meaningful engagement, narrative-driven content can build trust, sustain audience relationships, and generate credible Word of Mouth. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how storytelling functions as a powerful mechanism for audience engagement and organic communication in contemporary social media contexts.

This study is constrained by several scope-related limitations. The analysis draws on insights from only five participants within a similar age group (19-24 years old), which may not fully capture variations in audience engagement across different generational segments. Furthermore, the study concentrates solely on Instagram, while Rintik Sedu's storytelling presence spans multiple media formats that could influence Word of Mouth in diverse ways. Consequently, the findings reflect a specific contextual setting and should be viewed as exploratory rather than representative of wider audiences or digital communication practices.

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