

Brand-Celebrity Fit, Self-Concept Consistency and Ads Experience*--An Empirical Study of Responses Towards Weibo Celebrity Ads

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Abstract: Drawing on self-concept consistency theory, sponsor fit theories and advertising literature, we examine the influence of brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency on Weibo users' ads experiences and their responses to Weibo celebrity advertising. By stating how Weibo celebrity characteristics influence celebrity fans' perceptions, we describes a mechanism by which celebrity fans may respond positively to celebrity advertising in Weibo. We collected data to test our model by online survey. The sponsors of Weibo celebrity advertising were suggested to cooperate with the celebrity who had significant image and loyalty fans, and the celebrity image was consistent with their brand personality.

Keywords: Weibo celebrity ads, brand-celebrity fit, self-concept consistency, ads experience

1. Introduction

In China, Weibo is biggest platform for strangers' interaction (Weichat is the biggest platform for friends' interaction). Until 2019, Weibo has 360 million monthly active users, more than half of whom are young people [1]. The big market and strong public opinion impact attract enterprises to sponsor Weibo celebrity to carry out advertising. However, few academic studies investigate Weibo users acceptance of Weibo celebrity ads.

In order to fill the gap, we use self-concept consistency theory and sponsor fit theories to investigate the impact of brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency of celebrity fans on their ads experiences and behavioral responses to celebrity advertising in Weibo. In particular, the study aimed to find the answers of the following research questions: (1) how brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency influence Weibo celebrity fans' ads experiences; and (2) to what extent do ads experiences mediate the relationship between brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency and fans' responses to ads. This application of the double congruency perspective is novel and creative in advertising research. The study will help to find the key determinants of successful Weibo celebrity advertising, which have important managerial implications for e-marketing.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Ads experiences

Brand is an intangible asset with economic value, which uses abstract, unique and recognizable mental concepts to express its differences, thus occupying a certain position in people's mind [2]. The focus of people's attention is no longer the symbol recognition function provided by the brand, but whether the brand can surpass the product function and bring them all kinds of sensory, complex or value satisfaction. In short, the brand should not only give "functional" benefits, but also supply "experience" or "emotional" benefits. Ads are the most important channel of brand experience to attract buying. According to Schmitt's theory, ads experience contains feelings, emotions, thoughts, actions, and connections. In Weibo, users can watching and listening ads videos, reading and thinking the ads contents, clicking Like button, forwarding and giving comments on ads [3]. All these responses express Weibo celebrity fans' attitudes toward the ads.

Hence, we hypothesize:

H1: Ads experiences positively influence behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising.

2.2. Self-concept consistency

Brands, like people, have their own unique personality characteristics. Aaker Jennifer pointed out that the definition of brand personality is "a group of personality traits associated with a brand"[4]. According to "self-image consistency theory", consumers are more likely to choose brands with personality consistent with their self-image [5]. Similarly, Weibo accounts are controlled by users to express their thoughts, value, and personality. A celebrity’s fans who follow the Weibo celebrity often have similar personality with the celebrity, and agree with the celebrity’s opinions published in Weibo. These fans love the celebrity and understand that the celebrity needs sponsors to survive. To some extent, they support the ads in the celebrity account. Thus, when a celebrity fans perceived a strong self-concept consistency with the Weibo celebrity, they should be more likely to have a better ads experience in the celebrity account and be more willing to respond to the advertising.

Thus, we hypothesize:

H2: Self-concept consistency positively influences ads experiences.

H3: Self-concept consistency positively and directly influences behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising.

2.3. Brand-celebrity fit

On the other hand, the relationship between brand and Weibo celebrity is also important to Weibo users’ attitudes[6]. Gwinner and Eaton believe that the spokesperson will enhance the brand awareness, such sponsorship will guide fans to transfer their love for the spokesperson to the sponsor's brand. When the sponsorship project matches the brand (functionally or figuratively), it will promote the transformation process[7]. In Weibo, when the brand image of ads matches the Weibo celebrity image, the celebrity fans should be more likely to accept the ads information. Because they don’t have conflicts in cognitions when they watching the ads.

Thus, we hypothesize:

H4: Brand-celebrity fit positively influences ads experiences.

H5: Brand-celebrity fit positively and directly influences behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising.

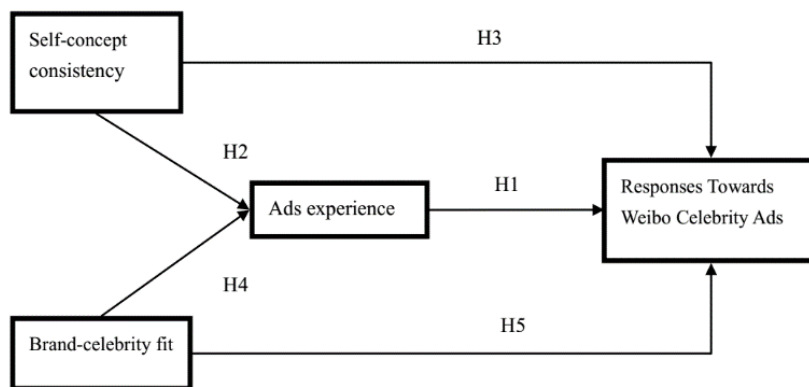


Figure 1: Structural Model

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

The study collected data by survey in Sojump (www.wjx.cn), which is a formal survey website used by many researchers. From June to July in 2020, we collected 467 samples. After descriptive analysis, we found that the proportion of male and female was relatively balanced, 63.7% of samples were 18 ~ 35 years old; and 79.63% have a college degree or above. On average, participants had been fans of a

Weibo celebrity for 1.6 years and spent more than 1 hour everyday in the celebrity account.

We used sophisticated seven-point Likert scales in the questionnaire. Then, we conduct a pretest to refined the questionnaire. When the participants were answering the questionnaire, they had to recall a Weibo celebrity with the most profound memory. They should answer each question according to their memory.

4. Analysis And Results

This study used AMOS 23.0 to analyze the data.

4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

The results of CFA showed that the model fitted the data reasonably well because all the values fall within the acceptable ranges ($\chi^2 = 130.630$, $df = 71$, $\chi^2/df = 1.840$; $GFI = 0.944$, $CFI = 0.982$, $AGFI = 0.917$, $NFI = 0.961$, $RMSEA = 0.050$). The factor load was above 0.70 and the average extraction variance (AVE) of all constructs was above 0.6, which indicated that the constructs had good aggregation validity. The CRs values were above 0.8, and the squared correlation didn't exceed the average AVE. It represented acceptable discriminant validity. Thus, all the indicators above suggested a good construct reliability (see Table I).

Table 1: CFA Results

Construct	Operational Measures of Construct	SFL ^a	Source
<i>Model Fit Indexes: $\chi^2 = 130.630$, $df = 71$, $\chi^2/df = 1.840$; $GFI = .944$, $CFI = .982$, $AGFI = .917$, $NFI = .961$, $RMSEA = .050$</i>			
Self-concept consistency AVE=.628 CR=.871	1	.786	[4,5]
	2	.767	
	3	.791	
	4	.824	
Brand-celebrity fit AVE=.777 CR=.933	1	.886	[6,7]
	2	.875	
	3	.880	
	4	.884	
Ads experience AVE=.697 CR=.873	1	.859	[2]
	2	.891	
	3	.748	
Behavioral Responses Toward Weibo celebrity ads AVE=.739 CR=.895	1	.857	[3]
	2	.854	
	3	.868	

4.2. Regression analysis

The study ran three regression analyses to test the mediation effect of ads experience and H1-5. As showed in Table II, all the three models were significant at 0.001 level. In Model 1, brand-celebrity fit ($\beta = 0.408$, $p < 0.001$) and self-concept consistency ($\beta = 0.381$, $p < 0.001$) explained 54.2% of variance in ads experience ($R^2 = 0.542$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.539$, F value = 167.059). So both brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency positively and significantly influenced ads experiences.

In Model 2, brand-celebrity fit ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.05$) and self-concept consistency ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$) explained 31.5% of variance in behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising ($R^2 = 0.315$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.310$, F value = 64.893). It indicated that the relationships between brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency and behavioral responses were positive and significant.

In Model 3, brand-celebrity fit ($\beta = -0.009$, $p = 0.900$), self-concept consistency ($\beta = .285$, $p < 0.001$) and ads experiences ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$) explained 38.9% of variance in the behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising ($R^2 = 0.389$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.382$, F value = 59.586). Thus self-concept consistency and ads experiences had positive, direct and significant impacts on behavioral responses. However, the impact of brand-celebrity fit was non-significantly negative on behavioral responses, which

meant brand-celebrity fit didn't directly influence behavioral responses.

Table 2: Standardized Regression Coefficients

<i>Independent Variables</i>	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	<i>Dependent Variables</i>		
	Ads experience	Behavior Response	Behavior Response
Brand-celebrity fit	.408***	.154**	-.009
Self-concept consistency	.381***	.437***	.285***
Ads experience			.401***
R²	.542***	.315***	.389***
Adjusted R²	.539***	.310***	.382***
F Value	167.059	64.893	59.586
ΔR²			0.074***

** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.001

4.3. Discussion

According to the SEM analysis results, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were verified, but H5 was not significant. The three regression analysis were also consistent with the three conditions confirming mediating effect. So we came to the conclusion that brand-celebrity fit directly influenced ads experience, and indirectly affected behavioral responses in which ads experiences played as a mediator, while self-concept consistency directly influenced both ads experience and behavioral responses.

Self-concept consistency significantly and positively related to ads experience. When a Weibo celebrity fans perceived strong self-concept consistency with the celebrity, they would be more likely to develop good ads experiences and respond positively to the advertising. The study also revealed that brand-celebrity fit positively influenced ads experiences. These findings show that in Weibo, the match of celebrity image with sponsored brand help shape nice perception of ads experiences. However, we found that brand-celebrity fit did not directly influence behavioral responses to Weibo celebrity advertising. It indicated that although both of the two congruencies led Weibo celebrity fans to commit themselves to the celebrity ads, only self-concept consistency directly determined celebrity fans' actual behavioral responses to celebrity advertising.

5. Conclusion

A Weibo celebrity's fans' perceptions of brand-celebrity fit and self-concept consistency toward the celebrity advertising determine their attitude to the advertising, which are directly influenced by self-concept consistency, and indirectly influenced by brand-celebrity fit. Therefore, the implication for Weibo celebrities is that for urgent change they should mind to accept the sponsor whose brand personality is matching with their images; but for long-term change, building a significant Weibo celebrity image and a clear position to attract loyalty fans is more important. We also suggest advertisers to sponsor the celebrity who has similar image and some position with their brand, because their target consumers are often fans of the celebrity, or these fans are more likely to buy their products.

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