

A Study on the effects of celebrity athletes' endorsement towards Consumers' Attitude in the 'We media' area

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Abstract. The corporate strategy of celebrity athlete endorsement in the We media area has developed rapidly in recent years. This research based on the dual mediation model (DMM) and extended advertising attitude model to DMM in 'We media' area which added variables of consumers' sharing intention. Empirical comparison of consumers' different attitude toward celebrity athletes' two types posts which match athletes or not. The findings reveal that results conform to the dual mediation impact hypothesis model when the athlete matches their posts. Conversely, the conclusion fit the affect Transfer hypothesis Model when the athlete don't match their posts. The results of the study can provide a reference for the corporate brand image strategy and advertising marketing strategy.

Introduction

With the coming of era of 'We media' development and commercialization, every celebrity athlete has their own public social account. They use 'We media's' attributes such as abundant equality, openness, sharing to push posts which mostly for instant game news, life feelings, and comments on hot social topic. Meanwhile, they also insert several elements of the brands, which they endorse, on the basis of a certain frequency. From the consumer's perspective of view, these posts represent the unique personality and values of celebrity athletes, which contain social communication properties. SAs Ciaran McCullagh puts it, "the media is flooded in every corner of our lives, and the mass media has become the 'cultural center' of today's world." 'We media' is different from the professional media activities, it changes from the conventional spreading types, which mainstream media controlled message and communicated to the public(point to surface), to the equal and unique form that ordinary people spread information from one individual to another individual(point to point).

'We media' celebrity athletes' endorsement is a emerging concept of marketing management and become a particularly new worldwide phenomenon. Most interestingly, other non-sports-oriented world's top luxury and financial brands such as Rolex, Credit Suisse also has cross-border cooperation with him. Because those brand deliver their distinctive brand value and increase the brand's enchantment by the celebrity athletes' behavior in the game or life which matched their brand's spirit exactly. Therefore, this study presents the question that whether different communicating results arise when the celebrity athletes' endorsement match the brand or not in the 'We media' area? What will be the impact of changes when consumer attitudes toward those two contrary types of posts?

The research framework of this study is an extended dual mediation model which recognized the posts of celebrity athletes as an essential material. The dual-mediator model is a theoretical model based on cognitive reflection models discovered by Mackenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986). The formal studies the experimental materials contained five variables such as cognition of consumers toward brand, attitude of consumers toward brand, cognition of consumers toward Ad, attitude of consumers toward Ad and the purchasing intention of consumers (PI for short in the following paper). In this study, consumers will encounter celebrity athletes' posts with cognition and then, they will form a positive or negative attitude. If consumers deem that posts meaningful, they will generate an intention of sharing. As the sports star post contains the corporate brand or product

related information, it has the similar persuasive mechanism as the traditional Ads and celebrity athlete' post is a particular advertising form. Hence, cognition of consumers toward posts (C_e for short in the following paper) is equivalent to cognition of consumers toward Ads (C_{ad} for short in the following paper); attitude of consumers toward posts (A_e for short in the following paper) is equivalent to attitude of consumers toward Ads. (A_{ad} for short in the following paper) From this point of view, A_e may affect brand cognition, brand attitude (A_b for short in the following paper), consumers' sharing intention (SI for short in the following paper) and purchase intention.

Experiment

This study was designed to determine whether different communicating results arise when the celebrity athletes' endorsement match the brand or not in the 'We media' area and what impact of changes when consumer attitudes toward those two contrary types of posts. The following formal hypothesis is tested:

H1. The impact of post attitude on brand attitude

Miniard and other scholars believed that emotional transfer assumptions in line with the fine processing possibilities model (ELM). Brand awareness on the impact of brand attitude is the internal information processing of advertising information and advertising attitude on the brand attitude is the external edge of advertising information processing. As a result, the post attitude impacts the brand attitude directly and compliances with the edge path.

H1a. In the case of high degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete, post attitude toward consumers (C_e for short in the following paper) has a prominent impact on C_b and A_b .

H1b. In the case of low degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete, the effect of C_e on C_b and A_b is not significant.

H2. Whether the degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete, A_e has a prominent and direct impact on PI, meanwhile, the high degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete has more effects than the low matching situation.

The previous research and the extended attitude model of Fishbein verified the correlation between A_b and PI. The brand is vital to an enterprise. The A_b is also an important part of corporate brand equity and brand association.

H3. Whether the degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete, A_e has a prominent and directly impact on SI, meanwhile, the high degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete has more effects than the low matching situation.

In this study, the behavior of consumers' sharing with celebrates posts is a kind of word-of-mouth sharing communication. In the process of generating brand and relevant production reputation, consumers always shared their own brand or production feelings. But in the reputation stage, consumers shared brand production and services evaluation from others.

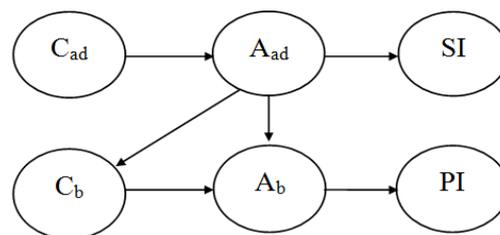


Figure1. Study hypothetical model

Methods

First come celebrity athletes and their choices of post. We illustrate with the example of Li Na, the women's world tennis champion. Li's micro-blog has 22.67 million fans, which is also nearly most among china athletes. Since Li registered her micro-blog in 2010, most of them are about Nike training club (NTC), including running, clothes for training, and training classes. Except sports brand, there are 3 posts concerned with education brand 51-Talk-English (51Talk), which is most

concerned, and closest posted except sports brands. Therefore, the research picks up NTC and 51 Talk in Li's micro-blog to take our experiment. NTC posts are those in athlete's area of expertise, and 51 Talk posts are those not.

During the experiment, those who took the questionnaire survey were asked to read screenshots of Li's post carefully. The sample of NTC experiment selects students from Beihang University and Tsinghua University. It comes to 202 valid samples, after removing of samples with missing values. The sample of 51 Talk experiment selects students from Beijing Foreign Studies University. The experiment materials of NTC experiment and 51 Talk experiment are both screenshots of Li's micro blog, which were putted on the top of questionnaire. For the increase of comparability external effects of two experiments, the choiced post are all Li's forward micro blog, which were posted by brands.

The study used SPSS23 and AMOS23for confirmatory factor analysis,constructing structural equation model analysis and correlation coefficient matrix maximum likelihood estimation for the model operation.

Results

The measuring results of Ab, Ae, SI and PI suggested that those variables Cronbach's α values was all greater than 0.8. All of those measuring variables were using a 7-point Likert scale. The generated by celebrity athletes' post such as Aad, Ab, PI, SI were carried out by factor analysis and the factor load values were all beyond 0.8. That meant the questionnaires' reliability and validity were qualified. Further, the distinction between the variables is good and the same variable' questions related tightly.

The structural equation parameters estimated by AMOS for the Nike test and 51Talk experiments are shown in Table 1 below. The results of Goodness of Fit shows the model and data fit in this study are better. Others indexes such as (RMSI), residual mean square and square root (RMR) fitness index (GFI), comparative fitness index (CFI) were shown in the model ($P < 0.05$) and the mean square error (RMSEA) displayed the relationship between the variables which can explain the data well.

Table1 Nike experiment and 51 experiment parameter estimation and goodness test

path	Nike experiment			51 experiment		
	paramete	SE	t	parameter	SE	t
β_{21}	0.69	0.09	7.92	0.09a	0.12	0.76
β_{31}	0.41	0.09	4.72	0.46	0.07	6.73
β_{41}	0.79	0.11	7.56	0.68	0.09	7.55
β_{32}	0.53	0.07	7.93	0.50	0.04	12.17
β_{43}	0.70	0.11	6.41	0.77	0.11	7.23
γ_{11}	0.50	0.05	9.69	0.55	0.50	11.23
	X ² =122.9, Df=61, p < 0.01, RMR=0.077,			X ² =92.8, Df=61, p < 0.05, RMR=0.08, GFI=0.934,		

Ae→Ab : The influence of post attitude on consumers' attitudes towards brand

For Li Na's released post in the Nike experiment, Ae impacted Cb and the Ab significantly at the same time. In the case of high degree of match between brand and celebrity athlete, it's indicating that Ae not only directly affects Ab, but also indirectly impacted Cb when consumers processed the information.

Although Ae impacted Ab significantly in Li Na's released post of the 51 experiment, the effects from Ae to Cb were not prominent. It meant that consumers processed the information from the celebrity athlete in case of the low degree of match between brand and celebrity; AE can still directly affect Ab, but can't indirectly affected Ab through Cb. The result verified that H1a was valid and H1b does not hold.

Ae→PI : The effect of post attitude on purchase intention

Both in the Li Na’s post of Nike experiment and 51Talk experiment, regardless of those posts matched the enterprises’ brand or not, Ae had a significant effect on PI. The result verifies the hypothesis H2.

Ab→SI : The Impact of Brand Attitude on Purchase Intention

Both in the Li Na’s post of Nike experiment and 51Talk experiment, regardless of those posts matched the enterprises’ brand or not, Ae had a significant effect on SI. The result verifies the hypothesis H3.

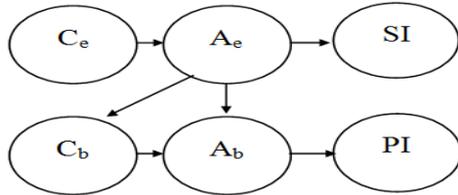


Figure2. Nike experiment path graph

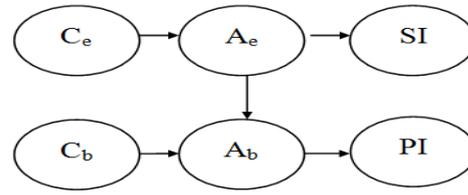


Figure3. 51 experiment path graph

The above analysis indicated that when the celebrity athlete’s post was matching the brand or not, the different effects toward the consumers’ attitudes and intentions were generated. Specific impact paths were shown in Figure 2 and Figure3.

Conclusion

The American psychologist U•Neisser pointed out, that cognitive reaction is all working processes of one’s sense, including transform, simplify, store,renew and utilize. We can see from the result of our research, when customers are stimulated by posts, which are published by celebrity athletes, they will have great reflection on their attitude towards the brand, Ae influence Ab most especially. This phenomenon accords with the ELM Theory, which means customers’ attitude comes from peripheral path, when they have low envolvment of advertisement. In this situation, Aad has more influcen on Ab than Cb.

For the strategy of enterprises, not only maintain the celebrity athletes posts have a strong band with brand’s value and spirit, but also utilize the celebrity athletes’ unique marketing advantages to ensure the brand’s sustainable development and appeal to the consumers’ elusive purchasing attitude and intention in the different situation.

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