

DOCTORAL THESIS

Linking consumer: endorser relationship with source credibility and consumer brand-related responses: a para-social interaction perspective

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on celebrity endorsement have focused on merits of the celebrity endorser as the key factors for predicting endorsement effectiveness. This research extends previous research by exploring the effects of the consumer's para-social interaction (PSI) with the celebrity. Based on the Source Credibility Model, the proposed model takes PSI as the core variable and examines its relationship with self-brand connection and ideal congruency. Two studies were conducted using online questionnaires to collect consumers' self-reported data. Study 1 tested a partial model using sports celebrities. Study 2 tested the full model using entertainment celebrities. Study 1 had 605 respondents and study 2 had 387 respondents. The respondents were young, well-educated and included both fans and no-fans of the selected celebrities. The results showed that consumer-celebrity PSI was an essential factor in the endorsement process. The perceived attractiveness of a celebrity was an antecedent to PSI, which in turn allowed the consumer to establish a personal connection with the endorsed brand and resulted in positive brand attitude. Furthermore, the results showed that consumers tend to have stronger PSI with a celebrity when they hold a higher degree of ideal congruity with the celebrity. Finally, results indicated that the context in which the celebrity was shown with the brand had significant effects, with a real-life context yielding stronger effects than an ad endorsement context or a product placement context. In sum, this research extended the source attractiveness model by clarifying the endorsement process to include consumer-celebrity PSI and brand-related responses. It also contributed to the audience-celebrity PSI theory. In addition, this research revealed the potential impact of celebrity-brand associations in real-life contexts on endorsement effectiveness, thus providing new insights for research related to the various forms of celebrity endorsement.

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