

DOCTORAL THESIS

Social Media Marketing on Facebook: The Role of Construal Level

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ABSTRACT

To devise marketing strategy in today's competitive landscape, social media has always been embedded in the comprehensive thinking about the marketing campaign development. Marketers are attracted to build communities or pages of brands for marketing purposes. Social media has different characteristics than traditional marketing communication channels. Research on understanding how we may make good use of social media to achieve favorable marketing outcomes is needed but scarce. Recently, with reference to the unique characteristics of social media (connectedness and interactions), Li et al. (2020) offered an integrative framework for understanding social media marketing strategies (SMMSs). In this framework, Li et al. (2020) offered a taxonomy of classifying SMMSs, which gives an excellent starting point for social media marketing research to relate, accumulate, and collectively advance the body of knowledge and practice on social media marketing. In response to the call of investigating issues related to SMMS implementation, this research aims to examine the critical factors in social media campaigns that can facilitate the execution of different SMMSs to achieve their strategic outcomes.

This research draws on construal level theory (CLT) to be the framework to examine the joint effects of SMMSs and marketer-controllable campaign characteristics. Specifically, two marketer-controllable campaign characteristics, namely campaign spokesperson identity (who to speak for a campaign) and campaign distribution channel (where to place a campaign), are investigated. In addition, based on the insights drawn from the literature review, this research also looks into the role of consumer engagement in explaining the favorable effects brought by social media marketing campaigns.

This research grounds on the construal fit mechanism and proposes that, when the construal level of SMMS and that of campaign characteristic match or "fit" with one another, consumer reactions to the campaign are intensified. Such a fit in construal levels enhances consumer engagement in processing the campaign information and results in a "feeling right" experience. In developing a marketing campaign on social media, marketers need to decide, among others, the campaign strategy and campaign characteristics. Such decisions influence what and how the campaign information is presented to target audiences. Importantly, marketers are interested in the downstream consequences after the target audiences are exposed to the campaign, that is, how target audiences process the campaign information and then react to the campaign. Therefore, the construal fit effect, which predicts the downstream consequences of being exposed to situations involving more than one psychological dimension, is suitable as the theoretical foundation to predict consumer reactions after being exposed to a social media marketing campaign. Moreover, this research offers insights and establish marketer-actionable guidelines on when celebrities versus KOLs are more effective social media campaign endorsers.

A series of field experiments (Study 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b) were conducted under real business environment using Facebook fan pages in normal operation to test the conceptualisation of the hypotheses and provided evidence for generalisability and external validity of the theoretical arguments. The results also pre-tested and operationalised for the impact of construal fit between social media marketing strategies and different elements of marketing mix. To examine and calibrate depth of the hypotheses, main study were laboratory experiments to test the process mechanism of construal fit. It aimed to (1) demonstrate the construal fit effect between elements of marketing campaign strategy and elements of campaign content, and to (2) directly tested the construal fit mechanism. The study manipulated one element of marketing strategy and one element of campaign content, yielding a 2x2 between-participants design. These results provide solid evidence for the construal fit mechanism of the interactive effect between strategy objective and spokesperson identity. This study shows that relational (transactional) promotion event using celebrity (KOL) spokesperson induces higher behavioural intention than using KOL (celebrity) spokesperson because their construal levels match with one another. Such fit effect induces people to be more engaged in processing information regarding the event, which in turn drives people to find the event information easier to process and hence enhances their behavioural intention towards the event, such as feeling more interested in the event and be more willing to join the event.