Celebrity Endorsement on Microblog: 
the Role of Source Factors and Audience Factors

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Abstract

Brands have begun to utilize celebrity microbloggers to endorse their products on microblog, due to the popularity and information sharing convenience of microblog services. Previous research has found many advantages of using celebrity endorsers and provided several models to explain the influential mechanism of celebrity endorsement. However, the communication patterns of the microblog have changed from that of the traditional mass media, including the consumer-endorser relationship, message format and consumer response mechanism. Therefore, the influential factors and mechanism of celebrity endorsements on microblog could also be different from that on the traditional mass media. To date, quite limited empirical studies have explored celebrity endorsement within the social media context. This dissertation intends to fill the gap through an empirical study of celebrity endorsements on microblog.

The purpose of the research was to (1) examine the influence of source factors (celebrity attractiveness and credibility, celebrity/product congruence and brand credibility) and audience factors (fan/celebrity parasocial interaction and product involvement) related to celebrity endorsement effectiveness [attitudes towards advertising on microblog (Aad), attitudes towards the product (AP) and purchase intention (PI)]; (2) explore new effectiveness and (3) test a model of celebrity endorsements on microblog. The dissertation reports three related individual studies. Study 1 examined the influence of celebrity credibility and attractiveness, celebrity/product congruence, and fan-celebrity parasocial interaction (PSI) on celebrity endorsement effectiveness (Aad, AP and PI) were examined through a data survey. Study 2 also used survey data to further explore the influential factors of celebrity endorsement effectiveness shown on microblog, including fans’ supportive attitude towards the posting advertising behavior, fans’ intentions to retweet the celebrity endorsement message and keep on following celebrity microbloggers. Finally, study 3 was an experimental
study which investigated the effect of brand credibility, product involvement and PSI on celebrity endorsement effectiveness on microblog and the interaction among the influential factors.

The results indicate that the role of PSI is prominent. PSI is a significant positive predictor of all celebrity endorsement effectiveness, and of fans’ perception of celebrity credibility, celebrity/product congruence, and brand credibility. On the other hand, the influences of the celebrity’s own characteristics (attractiveness and credibility) have been attenuated. Both celebrity/product congruence and brand credibility have a significant positive effect on Aad and AP. The product involvement moderates the relationship between brand credibility and celebrity endorsement effectiveness. The studies also delineated and tested comprehensive models to illustrate the influential process of celebrity endorsements on microblog. The research extends previous research on celebrity endorsement to the social media context and contributes to advertising and social media literature. Furthermore, the findings of this study also provide practical insights into the feasibility of the existing advertising type (celebrity endorsement) applied in the new media context (microblog). Theoretical and practical implications, limitation of the research, and suggestions for future study are discussed.