Public Abstract

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Title:Effective Spokespersons on Twitter: Experimenting with how Profile Gender & Network Size Impact User Perceptions of Credibility and Social Attraction

In addition to pulling in millions of everyday users, Twitter attracts strategic communicators aiming to forge personal bonds with those users. But strategic communicators face a dilemma in creating Twitter profiles online, as the features of an effective profile are not well-researched, particularly for spokespersons representing a brand or organization.

This experiment investigates how a spokesperson's gender and network size on Twitter influence credibility and social judgments--both particularly important to Twitter spokespersons, who simultaneously represent a brand and interact with users socially.

Despite significant findings of similar experiments exploring other social media, this experiment had few significant results. Likely this is explained by the participants' lack of experience with Twitter, which might have prevented them from judging and understanding profile cues as Twitter users would.

However, findings indicate a difference in how prior Twitter users and nonusers judge profiles based on the spokesperson's gender--namely, that prior users found the male profiles more competent, while nonusers found female profiles more competent. This indicates learned judgment on Twitter, something strategic communicators should carefully consider when creating profiles.