

EFFECTIVE SPOKESPERSONS ON TWITTER: EXPERIMENTING WITH HOW PROFILE GENDER & NETWORK SIZE IMPACT USER PERCEPTIONS OF CREDIBILITY AND SOCIAL ATTRACTION

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ABSTRACT

In addition to pulling in millions of everyday users, Twitter attracts strategic communicators aiming to forge personal bonds with users. 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. Using a 2 (network size) x 2 (gender) mixed design experiment, this study investigates how a profile's social network size and gender influence social judgments of that profile's social attractiveness and credibility. 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, there was a significant interaction found on Competence (a factor of credibility) for profile gender and participants' prior Twitter use—namely, that prior users found the male profiles more competent, while nonusers found female profiles more competent. This does perhaps indicate that Twitter users learn to judge certain profile cues differently from nonusers, and that gender plays a role in those cues.