

Role of parasocial relationship (PSR)

Subjects: Sociology

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Individuals' emotional bonds with media performers have impacts on desirable attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. A parasocial relation (PSR) is "a seeming face-to-face relationship" created between a media persona and audience members. PSR has persuasive influence on knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors concerning specific social issues such as health, environment, and politics. Audiences are also likely to perform the behaviors advocated by celebrities and adopt attitudes and beliefs similar to those held by celebrities.

Keywords: parasocial relationship ; social media ; celebrity advocate ; parasocial interaction ; media effect

High-profile celebrities have the capacity to attract public attention and mobilize public engagement in the social causes they are involved in ^{[1][2]}. They can also serve as role models for individuals in promoting pro-social behaviors. Risk prevention messages delivered by celebrities increasingly affect public risk perception and behavioral change, particularly among young people, through psychological involvement ^{[3][4]}. Among various causes, the climate change issue has received the most attention and efforts from major celebrities. While previous studies provide some evidence on the potential advantages of using celebrity spokespersons in environmental advocacy ^{[1][2]}, very little empirical study has been conducted on the impacts of celebrity interventions.

In addition to sources of messages, how the climate crisis is framed impacts positive attitudes, risk perception ^[5], and willingness to take action to combat climate change ^[6]. However, there is a lack of understanding about effective message strategies when using celebrity sources. To fill this research gap, this study focuses on emotional framing and framing of celebrity involvement, which can exert influences on climate attitudes and behaviors.

Previous studies indicate that strategic use of emotions such as fear and hope relate to environmental attitudes and behaviors. Fear appeals were found to be useful in driving pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors ^[7], as fear evokes risk awareness ^[8]. Research has shown that hope appeals elicit perceived efficacy ^[9], which results in public engagement in the climate issue ^[10]. These studies indirectly indicate that emotions play a critical role in framing of celebrities' advocacy messages.

On the other hand, a celebrity's environmental involvement such as charitable work and environmental education leads to public engagement in environmental discourses ^[11]. This finding indicates that the demonstration of a celebrity's involvement is expected to positively affect the adoption of the celebrity's eco-attitude and behaviors.

Social media research has been conducted to reveal an information diffusion algorithm ^[12], the process underlying community formation ^[13], and user interaction and community building on social networks ^[14]. However, there has been very little empirical research on the effect of celebrities' social media use on environmental attitudes and behaviors.

Thus, the aim of this study is threefold: to understand (1) effective communication strategies in celebrity climate advocacy, (2) the psychological process underlying framing effects, and (3) the role of psychological attachment with celebrities in climate attitudes and behaviors in the context of Twitter. Based on these objectives, this study investigates the effects of framing of celebrities' messages on individuals' attitudes and behaviors for climate change mitigation. This study also explores a sequential mediation process between emotional framing and pro-environmental behaviors. In addition, this study assesses the role of psychological bonds with celebrities as predictors and moderators of the impact of framing of celebrity involvement. This study contributes to understanding the role of celebrities in climate change communication. It also provides practical implications on how to effectively design persuasive messages when using celebrity spokespersons for environmental advocacy via Twitter.

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