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I'm Your Fan – Engaging in Celebrity's Social Media Page with the Mediation of Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship

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I'm Your Fan – Engaging in Celebrity's Social Media Page with the Mediation of
Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship

by

Jiahui Zhuang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Social media enable celebrity to interact with their followers and enable followers to build the relationship through the interaction. Former research has found that openness and perceived interactivity are antecedents for parasocial interaction. In order to investigate the way to increase user's engagement in celebrity's social media page, this research examines the relationship between celebrity's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity, other user's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity, parasocial interaction, parasocial relationship, and social media engagement. Survey data were collected from 595 followers of one Chinese celebrity through an online survey. The results indicate that neither celebrity's nor other user's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity direct lead to user's social media engagement. However, PSI and PSR, which increased by celebrity's and other user's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity, have a positive relationship with user's social media engagement. It provides support for the mediating role of PSI and PSR to social media engagement.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

By May 17, 2017, monthly active users on Weibo have attained 3.4 hundred million (BBC News, 2017). Users discuss a lot of topics on this social platform, such as finance, food, education, sports, fashion, and celebrity. Entertainment occupies the largest portion among all of the topics in Weibo (Fan et al., 2014). Specifically, entertainment contains many subdivided topics, such as TV series, film, music, celebrity, variety show, reality show and so on. Among these topics, Weibo users spend a significant portion of their energy and time on talking about the celebrities.

According to the White Book on Weibo Celebrity (Sina, 2017), there were 280 thousand entertainment celebrity accounts on Weibo which include 2000 top celebrities. Due to the large number of celebrities on Weibo, monthly active fans account for more than 50% of active users on this social media platform. Statistics showed that celebrity voluntarily posts or interact with others twice per day. Weibo enables celebrities to communicate with both their real friends and their fans. Management companies also pay attention to the significant marketing meaning of Weibo. They take advantage of plenty of users of Weibo, to create topics to discuss.

As an online platform for users to publish their thoughts, opinions, and experiences, Weibo let users share their likes, feelings, and criticisms about TV (Hu et al., 2015). Due to the interactive feature of social media, the relationships between users, users and celebrities become closer than before.

Weibo has been accepted as an irreplaceable marketing tool along with other integrated media by both the markets and the academia (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Baym, Zhang, and Lin, 2004; Brodie et al., 2013; Frederick et al., 2012). How the celebrity interacts with their followers would largely affect follower's attitude toward the idol.

In order to maximize the effects of this online communication and marketing, researchers tend to investigate the relationship between followers and social media personae. Many researchers found that Parasocial Interaction (PSI) works as the mediated variable connect the media consumer and media personae (Labrecque, 2014; Tsai and Men, 2016; Tsai, and Men, 2013). At the meantime, social media enable users to get access to other's opinion toward specific person or topic. Among those social media users, some are active ones, and some are "lurking" ones. What kind of relationship between them? How will they influence each other in terms of the interactivity and openness features of Weibo? These questions need to be answered from theoretical insight.

This research will focus on a Chinese actor – Yueming Pan, to investigate his follower's engagement to his Weibo page. Pan's followers are not the most on Weibo, however, Pan interacts often with his fans. He not only "step into" his follower group to talk with them, but also often "like" fans' posts about him. Pan's followers will be invited to

participate in an online questionnaire, to study the PSI and PSR's mediation to social media engagement.

Purpose of This Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions: What is the situation of the current celebrity-follower relationship on Weibo? How do Weibo followers connect with others? Are they active or non-active? Do Weibo posts employ openness and interactivity increase the PSI? To what extent do Weibo posts employ openness and interactivity predictors user's engagement? Does the relationship between users influence their attitude toward the celebrity they follow?

In the following, the author will review the related theoretical constructs and empirical support. The literature review mainly focuses on Uses and Gratifications theory, Parasocial Interaction theory, and parasocial relationship theory, try to tease the logic of this research. After that, a survey will be conducted to testify the hypotheses between variables.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Origins of Uses and Gratifications Theory

Research about uses and gratifications (U&G) theory originates from the prominent feature of U&G theory explains the motivations of audiences who actively use media, to attain certain needs (Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch, 1974). Early U&G scholars constructed some empirical and qualitative research to investigate the motives, functions, and gratifications of the audience use specific media and content, such as books, soap series, music on radio, comic, and newspaper (Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw, 1940; Herzog, 1942; Wolfe and Fiske, 1949). They concluded that each media usage decision was closely connected with audiences' functional objects, such as get information, satisfy one's social role, or obtain live suggestion (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973).

According to its qualitative research feature, early U&G research before the 1950s provided the factual basis but is lack of theoretical consistency and group universality (McQuail, 1994). In order to discover more relationships between perceived gratifications and social or psychological needs, scholars mentioned and tested more social and psychological variables in their research. Specifically, they identified mental ability, family

and social relationship situation, and race (Schramm, Lylē, and Parker, 1961; Gerson, 1966).

Ruggiero (2000) identified that U&G research between the 1950s and 1960s shifted from effects model to more functionalist perspective. In other words, U&G scholars believed that the reason why users choose media and media content origins from their purpose to attain specific functions. For instance, Mendelsohn (1964) concluded many media functions from radio listening: companionship, decreasing loneliness or boredom, promoting social interaction and so on.

In response to the criticism in academia that U&G research has a vague conceptual framework, is short of clear concepts and explanatory equipment, and consideration of audience's role in media content, scholars made many studies during the 1970s. Concentrated on different objects (e.g., media or content), different materials (e.g., programs or types) and different nations, researchers studied a mixture of both shared and different U&G functions (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974). McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) investigated four main categories of features: diversion (escape from the real life stress, and emotional release); personal relationships (alternative companionship and social purpose); personal identity (reference and value enhancement); and surveillance. Based on this classification, researchers suggest U&G students that they could analyze and sum needs back from gratifications, such as security desire from surveillance, seeking information from build one's cognitive system (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974). This backward analytic method could be used in the latter research to find more media consumer's needs.

Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) suggested sources for researchers to investigate media gratifications: unique media content, typical attributes from different media modes, and media consuming situations. Some researchers also found that different type of media shared the same function, in other words, some functions that provided by one medium could be replaced by other (Robinson, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass, 1973). It leaves some research questions for the following researchers, such as what is the irreplaceable function of media, if that affects the user's using habit toward other media. For media industry workers, they could take advantage of the irreplaceable feature of media to promote its effects.

Windahl (1981) pointed out the most prominent difference between mass communications effects research and U&G research is that the former one investigates communicator's role mostly, while the latter one emphasized the audience. Cantril stated that U&G researchers identified media users as active participants, and they consumed media for social and psychological needs, rather than non-purposeful.

Regarding the active feature of media users, researchers argued that user's activity present dynamically across the whole communication process (Levy & Windahl, 1984). In other words, in the communication process, different individuals, choose different media type, consume different content and spend different time on it. Speak concise, user's active feature based on their dynamics in every phrase of media consumption.

In addition to traditional media such as newspaper, radio, and television, U&G has been well applied to investigate the gratifications of "new media." Leung and Wei (2000) concluded the motives for users using the cell phone are mobility, immediacy, and

instrumentality. Even more, they predicted the essential origins of these motives are affection and sociability.

Uses and Gratifications of the Internet

Since the end of 20th century, U&G theory has been applied for investigating user's reasons, motives, and needs to use the Internet. Morris and Ogan (1996) stated that U&G is a valuable and natural paradigm to understand and investigate the Internet, since it features user's active character and covers both mass and interpersonal communication. Researchers have found some gratifications that the Internet provided, such as escapism, socialization, and information control (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999); informed, diversion and entertainment, communication, sights, and sounds (Charney and Greengberg, 2001). Specifically, under the information seeking gratification, some researchers found that the Internet users would like to be informed by professional messages from expertise (Ferguson and Perse, 2000).

Some researchers concluded two broad types of gratifications: content presented by media, such as information or entertainment; or usage process, such as browsing or playing the device. They summarized these two as content gratifications and process gratifications (Cutler & Danowski, 1980; Stafford & Stafford, 1996; Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade, 2004).

It provides a new model for the following U&G scholars and students to study the theory.

They can base on the messages users obtain from media and the usage steps, process to investigate the theory.

Parker and Plank (2000) found that relaxation and escape are the key variances that predict the Internet usage. To find the motives that users consume the Internet, researchers suggested the academia to base on the general types of human behavior's incentives: social, status, monetary, enjoyable activity, novel sensory, and self-reactive incentives (Bandura, 1986). LaRose and Eastin (2004) applied the U&G to the Social Cognitive Theory, and their outcomes stated that expected activity outcomes, as cheer myself up, play a game I like, feel entertained, and hear music I like is closely connected with entertainment gratifications.

The online community gathers the Internet users together by their shared interests, likeness, values, profits or motives. Even though they do not meet online, the functions the websites provide, such as online chat, comments, and upload photos let users enjoy the experience on a virtual community. There are many sites that serve as the different virtual community, whether users choose to use or continue to be active in the community rely on their needs and uses are satisfied (Sangwan, 2005). User's needs satisfaction is beneficial to their attitude toward media (Severin, and Tankard, 2001). According to Bagozzi, and Dholakia (2002), virtual communities that cover sufficient knowledge satisfied user's affective and socialized needs through their participation and interaction in the community.

Among the gratifications that found by U&G researchers, Internet addiction is more related to process gratifications. However, regarding the negative outcome of the Internet addiction, researchers also found that the addiction gratification would leave the Internet users away from the real world (Song, LaRose, Eastin, and Lin, 2004).

Parker and Plank (2000) suggested future research to investigate more detailed gratifications. Specifically, they stated that the reason was a different type of websites might reveal different motivations and needs. The Internet communication researchers have predicted the huge commercial and marketing effects of it (Drèze & Zufryden, 1997; Stafford, Stafford and Schkade, 2004). With the development of e-commerce, the academia needs to know better the reason why consumers choose the Internet, so that to provide the operational guides for enterprise (Stafford, Stafford and Schkade, 2004).

Uses and Gratifications of Social Media

The Internet has changed the way people interact and communicate with others (Raacke, and Bonds-Raacke, 2008). The beginning of origins of social networking sites put insights on a specific population that with similar interests, such as MySpace and Facebook. The functions they provide, such as post personal information and pictures, leave comments and latest events expand the content and style that friends communicate online.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. With the wide range of digital technologies, users adopt many different media to satisfy their integrated needs. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that Facebook serves as providing fun and notice social updates in one’s social network, while instant messaging serves more on maintaining and developing the

relationship. It reveals that both online and offline communication tools integrate together to constitute individual's social lives (Baym, Zhang, and Lin, 2004).

Another feature of social media is that user can be both content creator and consumer, social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr is also identified as user-generated media (UGM). Shao's (2009) analytical framework explain the way and the reason why users using social media: participating in the interaction by producing one's unique personal content, so that consume media at the same time. He also concluded a clear statement of user's motives from the three reasons: users consume certain UGM content form information and entertainment, they participate for social interaction and online virtual community development, and they produce unique content for self-expression and self-actualization.

Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) concluded four primary needs for participating in Facebook group: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information, from their survey which was conducted to investigate 1,715 college students who joined Facebook Groups. Even though under different demographic characteristics, the basis for individuals join the same online groups is their shared interests (Kaye and Johnson, 2002). Similar to the former gratifications such as socializing and (social) information, Quan-Hasse and Young (2010) found four more types of factors that obtained from Facebook gratifications: pastime, affection, fashion, and share problems. They also stated that the relationship between different social media is not mutually exclusive, but is interrelated.

User's different demographic background, such as sex, nations, age, and personality would lead to different uses and gratifications features (Raacke, and Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Correa, Hinsley, and Zuniga (2010) found that both extroverted female and male were likely to frequent social media users, while men with unstable emotion were likely regular social media users. Personalities such as neuroticism, openness to experiences, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are also predictors for Internet and social media use (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). A survey that was conducted to investigate the U.S. college student's social media usage status shows that the younger users who have a higher degree of Sociability and Neuroticism were more likely to have social motives to use social media (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, and Lee, 2012).

With the criticism of U&G theory is too general in the communication academia, researchers tend to investigate specified one activity, such as sharing news (Lee and Ma, 2012). They found that users who had strong information seeking, socializing, and status-seeking motivations revealed that they were more likely to share news on social media. Researchers also found that blog users who would like to share more information on their blog had motivations for building social relationships and reputations (Hsu and Lin, 2008).

Social media also serve as exchange channel for consumer and brand to interact. By consumer's engagement in social media, such as express, interact, create, and share brand-related information, the brand, or the company also gain many benefits (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit, 2011). Similar to Shao's (2009) user-generated media user's activity framework: producing-participating-consuming, they developed three types of user's participation in

brand-related social media page: consuming-contributing-creating. Base on former literature, they exemplified certain activities of each type (Li and Bernoff, 2008). For example, users consume brand-related social media by reading, viewing, listening, watching, playing and downloading related content; they contribute to brand's values by commenting, rating products, and engaging in conversations with online brand community; lastly, users create their personalized content by writing articles and reviews, uploading verified types of brand-related content.

User's some usage features appear in the same context, and researchers found that some of user's using motivations predict specific feature use. For example, descriptive information sharing motivations predict some use pattern such as status updates and use of Groups; social interaction motive, specifically presents as communication with others on social media predict features as commenting, private messaging, and chat (Smock et al., 2011).

The interactive feature of social media enables individual, organization, company, and brand to communicate with audiences, not just deliver messages. Its engagement is participatory and reciprocal (Heldman, Schindelar, and Weaver III, 2013) that promotes conversations during the process of communication. Moreover, this kind of engagement would also lead to an intimate and long-term relationship.

Social media engagement research is also widely applied in stimulating consumer-brand relationship under marketing literature (Sashi, 2012). He developed a cycle framework

of the customer engagement. The specific stages are connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, loyalty, and engagement.

Social Media Engagement

The marketing field has been greatly valued for branding by marketers to attain a variety of marketing objectives including research, customer-brand relationship management, service, and sales promotions (Murdough, 2009; Ashley and Tuten, 2014). Marketers also participate in social media as one of their brand's persona, and they can be part of the marketing campaign by publishing branded content or communicate with the customer to promote their engagement (Tuten and Solomon, 2013). Researchers suggested brand marketers develop customer's social media engagement by increasing their connection to a brand-related story (Martin and Todorov, 2010).

Ashley and Tuten (2014) suggested some social media strategies that had correlations with customer engagement. They stated that the number and frequency brand post related tweets had great importance in attracting more followers. They also mentioned some characteristics that appeal followers, such as posts were resonant, vivid, and posts include experiential appeals have better brand conduction.

Social media environment serves as an online virtual community for users communication. Their social relationships establish and develop through increasing interaction (Kozinets, 1999). Member's engagement and participation are strengthened and intensified by community activities (Brodie et al., 2013). However, researchers have found

that consumer's engagement in the community has a weak relationship with their loyalty to the community in terms of their repurchase intention and recommendation likeness (Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006). Raïes, Mühlbacher, Gavard-Perret (2015) concluded from research that though firmly affective, normative and calculative commitments might be the reason why members have intense brand loyal behavior, they are no prerequisite for that. It calls for more research on academia to study the theory, the reason that predicts brand loyal behavior.

In the entertainment context, the academia also stated that the relationship between viewer and the reality show has a strong prediction of viewer's loyalty. Lewin, Rajamma, and Paswan (2015) investigated variables such as self-show connection, fulfillment, and co-production have a positive relationship with the involvement of the reality TV show. However, they show a little contribution to greater viewing loyalty. Wisneski (2015) stated that social media posts revealed interactivity and openness promote audiences engagement brought about their PSI with the personalities in series, this would lead to the audience viewing loyalty.

Parasocial Interaction (PSI)

Origins of PSI

Researcher's interests in parasocial interaction (PSI) origin from the expansion of mass media like radio and television. Horton and Wohl (1956) described PSI as an illusionary relationship that media consumer imagine they have with media "personae," such as newscasters and show hosts. The field of "personae" later expands to TV show characters

(Rubin, Perse, and Powell, 1985), and celebrities (Caughey, 1984). Through their consumption of media content, media users imagine that they have direct conversation and interaction with media personae during the process, which seemed like they directly communicate with real friends. Their PSI experience comes with full expression as seeking for instruction from media personae, imaging to participate in the program's activity, and even desiring to meet those media performers in real life (Rubin et al., 1985).

Two features were collected from TV viewers and radio listener's PSI with characters. The first one is interactivity, which means the interaction between media personae and consumers. It could be realized by adjusting the angle of the camera, eye contact with audiences and staring contest (Auter, 1992). The second one is openness. Similar to the role of private messages in friendship, intrinsic information and self-disclosure details make audiences feel intensely connected with the media personae (Auter, 1992; Meyrowitz, 1986; Stern, Russell, and Russell, 2007). Messages with interactivity and openness will intensify the PSI between media and consumers (Labreque, 2014).

Additionally, Turner (1993) found that homophily was the strongest predictor for audiences to have PSI with TV performers. Before this, attitude and behavior homophily have been found to be important in interpersonal and mass-mediated relationships (Kendall & Yum, 1984). Homophily is also called similarity; in other words, homophily refers to the similarity audiences have compared with the character, such as physical attributes, beliefs, values, characteristics in personality, demographic variables, and experiences (Eyal & Rubin, 2003).

Researchers have investigated the correlation between some variables and PSI. Berger and Calabrese (1974) mentioned that the decrease of uncertainty improved the interaction. Kellerman and Reynolds (1990) mentioned that one's understand about another decrease interpersonal uncertainty. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) concluded that shared attitudes and belief toward something also affect the interaction. Similarly, Giles (2002) suggested that user's likeness toward media and personae would predict interaction.

PSI on Social Media

The appearance of social media has largely changed the way people being informed, communicating, and consuming (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Many companies and brands have built social media page to disseminate related messages, and some even take social media as the essential marketing means. The advantages of this low-cost online tools are obvious: brands can advocate their unique values through varied forms, and they can obtain consumer's attitude toward brand's products or related information in turn.

Some researchers use PSI theory to explain the strong tie between consumer and brand on social media: brand takes advantage of the intimate connections built through social media so that to build up strong bonds with consumers (Labrecque, 2014). He also mentioned the effects PSI bring reversely, based on the intimate relationship increased by interactivity and openness, consumers show loyalty to the brand and would like to provide information as feedback.

Due to the technical characteristic of social media, consumers perceive interactivity during the social media consuming experience. Based on the technologies, marketers should think of every stage thoroughly to promote PSI. McMillan and Hwang(2002) mentioned some steps, such as navigating experience, feedback mechanism, and the speed website reply to consumers. However, Song and ZinkHan (2008) have stated that they believe interactivity depends on consumer's subjective perception, although they also emphasized that the perception the mutual communication experience would increase interactivity. Concerning the efficiency of the PSI building process, Labrecque (2014) also suggested that listening and responding enforce the positive outcomes of PSI. Specifically, these positive outcomes turn out to be consumer's active desire to trust, show loyalty to the brand and willingness to provide information.

Some researchers discussed the efficiency of organization-public relationship in a more empirical perspective. Tsai and Men (2016) focused on the communications that the organization's leader conduct to their social media followers. Through their quantitative survey with 332 social media followers, they stated that, as the corporate leader of the organizations, corporate executive officers could increase followers' favorable feeling by their parasocial interactions and relationships. Being similar to the celebrities, social media give these seemly untouchable people a channel to express their unique personal features and to show their daily lives and activities (Kantola, 2014). The humanity that they show on social media will, in turn, promoting organization's images to the viewers.

Considering the reason why media consumers construct PSI, some researchers tried to use psychological factor to predict PSI. Researchers have explored that people who feel lonely would like to rely more on this kind of interaction rather than other social relationships (Spitzberg and Cupach, 2008). Similarly to this connection, previous studies have stated that fandom activities might also lead to the feeling of excluded and loneliness (Leary, 1990; Smith, Fisher & Cole, 2007) since fandom culture belongs to minority products (Rokach & Brock, 1996).

O'Donovan (2016) applied qualitative and quantitative research to study how fandom activities affect PSI. The outcome of qualitative research reveals many subjective details from respondents. Through their answers, many fans mentioned that they "feel closer to celebrity" due to the more social media interaction. Furthermore, the researcher concluded the correlation between fandom activities and PSI seemed like a recycle effect that not only the former would intensify the latter, but also the PSI would increase more fandom activities. As some participants mentioned, with the closeness feeling with the figure, they would like to "write fiction" "share my own ideas" and "interact with other fans" (O'Donovan, 2016). However, due to the limited number of the quantitative research in this study, the positive correlation between Fandom Participation and PSI was found not significant.

In the social media context, researchers extend the implication of PSI to the athlete and their followers. Some researchers investigate how user's motivations affect their interaction with the athlete (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, and Walsh, 2012). They found that athlete's social level would strongly affect follower's PSI, such as the desire to have an

intimate relationship in reality. Furthermore, they found the correlations with traditional media also work in the social media context. Specifically, affinity, uncertainty decrease (Perse & Rubin, 1989), and similar attitude (Turner, 1993) were found correlated with social media follower's PSI with the athlete. They also found that information sharing was important for PSI.

PSI is one-sided that media users can maintain an enduring active status in their relationships with media personas (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Fredrick et al., 2012), while social media contains mutual features. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how social media vitalize PSI with new characteristics, especially under the context that the wide usage of social media arises from celebrities to politician, the variety show to TV series, company to non-profit organization.

Openness

Openness should be one of the predictors of PSI. In the early PSI research, researchers (Horton and Whol, 1956) have found that performers could apply many strategies to increase audience's intimacy perception, such as adjusting camera angels or adding communication with them. Later, during an experiment that was conducted in 1992, it shows that the character that "breaking the fourth wall" could speak directly to the audience presented more openness in the performance. The intimacy and candor promoted from this adjustment resulted in the higher level of PSI (Auter, 1992). Oswald, Clark, and Kelly (2004) concluded the positive prediction of openness to friendship satisfaction. Being similar to

friendship, the degree of PSI has a close relationship with intimacy and trust, which are presented as the information reveal (Labrecque, 2014). Specifically, information that reveals persona's inside aspects (Meyrowitz, 1986), perceived self-disclosure (Perse and Rubin, 1989), and personal details (Stern, Russell, and Russell, 2007) increase viewer's perceived PSI with the persona.

Openness and transparency have been seen as two beneficial elements to promote the efficiency of business communication in former studies (Tsai and Men, 2015). That encourages corporate leaders to reveal more personal information on social media to abridge the gap between them and consumers. Also, different degree of perceived interpersonal openness of celebrity's social media posts will predict the parallel degree of PSI (Labrecque, 2014). Given this research result, some scholars predicted that celebrities have a higher attitude toward online self-closure moderate the posting frequency and celebrity's PSI (Ledbetter and Redd, 2016). Working together with interactivity, they can boost consumer's PSI with the brand through social media platform, which presents as trust, loyalty, and willingness to reveal information. In conversation, openness has been proved to promote public engagement, through which company, celebrity or organization could build positive perceptions (Sweeter & Metzgar, 2007).

In terms of the intimate, frequent, and confessional characteristics of social media (Chung and Cho, 2017), it is easy for people to reinforce the degree of their self-disclosure by two dimensions: breadth and depth. They can not only intense the breadth of self-disclosure

by post numbers, but also intense the depth of that by posting some messages cover their private information, inside information, and emotions (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

Interactivity

Interactivity has been as a unique feature of the Internet. The concept of interactivity presents as different ways in today's online environment. Due to the development of technical functions, the website enables users to feel interactivity through some useful features, such as the ability of navigation, feedback mechanism or speed (McMillan and Hwang, 2002). Researchers tend to classify the technical interactivity as functional interactivity (Smith, 2010). Also, some researchers regard the online communication was similar to interpersonal communication that the interactivity relies on the closeness (Rafaeli, 1988). During an experiment which to investigate the effects of interactivity, researchers found that the interactivity of a political website increases the positive impression and the level of agreement to that politician (Sunder, Kalyanaraman, and Brown, 2003).

Some researchers argued that the effects of interactivity produced from the perceptual variable – perceived interactivity (McMillan and Hwang, 2002).

Online interactivity has been seen to increase the involvement of website. The early PSI researchers defined PSI as “interpersonal involvement of media user with what he or she consumes” (Rubin, Perse, and Powell, 1985). Scholars have been tried to investigate the relationship of interactivity and PSI. In the early PSI study, Auter (1992) argued from a TV program that the character increased the perceived interactivity by “directly addressing the

audience and adjusting to supposed responses,” and resulted in parasocial interaction. In an experiment which to investigate the user’s attitude toward a different level of interactivity, results showed that website with high interactivity was likely to stimulate users to post feedback (Thorson and Rodgers, 2006).

In a research that to investigate how celebrity athletes use social media (Twitter) to increase promotions, they found the most frequent way they use is direct communication between followers, which is the interactivity (Hambrick and Mahoney, 2011). According to Stever and Lawson (2013), celebrities who read their follower’s social media posts, reply to them and have a dialogue with followers are participating a new form of discourse. It reveals the essential importance of analysis of celebrity’s interactive presence on social media.

While the evident feature of parasocial interaction is media consumer’s illusionary feeling to the personae, social media enable the past imaginary connection to a real, public, and visible conversation. Moreover, social media engage fans in the direct address with celebrity (Marwick and Boyd, 2011). For celebrities, their interactive style will increase or decrease the interpersonal closeness with followers (Fredrick, Lim, Clavio, and Walsh, 2012).

Parasocial Relationship (PSR)

Parasocial interaction theory has been used to describe media consumer’s illusionary relationships with media personae, and these relationships are usually one-sided. Compared to interpersonal interaction or relationship, parasocial relationship typically maintained with a weaker bond (Ballantine and Martin, 2005). Some scholars considered parasocial interaction

and parasocial relationship as different concepts. They thought the interaction happen during the process of media consumption, and the relationship occurs after that (McDonald, and Hu, 2005). However, the number of encounters will be intense the level of parasocial relationship with media personae. During every encounter, media viewer will form an opinion about media personae and their feelings about that person gradually build to intense their parasocial relationships, just as with interpersonal relationships (Auter, 1992; Alperstein, 1991). With the intensification of that relationship, “viewing” will be seen as maintaining means for this friendship (Rubin, Perse, and Powell, 1985). In a television show, character increased the intimacy with audiences by directly addressing to them. It seems like the character break an imaginary fourth wall, which also increases the degree of interactivity (Auter, 1992).

As messages carrier, media not only alter the form of communication but also affect the result of “parasociality” during the communicative process (Auter, 1992). Parasocial interaction with the character appeared many times in the program on TV is used to see the highest level of parasociability (Ballantine and Martin, 2005).

Though parasocial interaction happens between media personae and the individual, it also exists in the face-to-face situation where have lots of media consumers. Especially in the online community, some Internet users interact with others, but some just read the interaction between others like a bystander. When they observe other user’s comments and conversations online, it seems like they become part of that but not participate in that, which is similar to the one-sided parasocial interaction.

Laken (2009) summarized the key characteristics of parasocial interaction or parasocial relationship: the interaction is mediated through media, the relationship should be one-sided, and it seems like friendship in real life.

In the online community, users are mutually affected by their activities. It is proposed that non-participants' attitudes and behaviors might be influenced by active users (Ballantine and Martin, 2005). It is necessary to investigate how parasocial relationship works between different levels of participate online users. People built the virtual relationship in virtual communities for meeting their social needs, and findings showed that the Internet usage intensity played an important role in the formation of the online virtual relationship. There is a difference between active users and lurkings (Marco Leimeister, Schweizer, Leimeister and Krcmar, 2008).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Promoting social media engagement is an important strategy for the marketer in the current digital environment (Chu and Kim, 2011). For celebrities, social media work as presentational media for self-disclosure and tools for branding (Marshall, 2010). Moreover, social media serve as a mediated channel that connects celebrity and their followers. It is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of celebrity social media page for promoting follower's engagement.

Past researchers investigated the antecedents of social media engagement, results showed that "involvement" was strongly connect to consumer brand engagement, and the relationship between consumer and the brand also predict the engagement (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie, 2014). Tsai and Men (2013) concluded from their research that, relationship-oriented role, such as parasocial relationship played a significant role in promoting consumer social media engagement. Results revealed that an intimate and personal relationship with the communicator predicted more engagements with that social media page.

Parasocial interaction refers to an imaginary one-sided relationship with humans appearing in the media, such as actors, celebrities, characters and personae (Giles, 2002). Under the social media context, people investigated the predictors of this relationship.

Researchers find that messages featured perceived interactivity and openness form PSI in communication (Labrecque, 2014). In turn, media consumers who built PSI with the media figure were likely to provide information and presented loyalty intention.

There are a few pieces of research to measure the predictors of social media user's parasocial interaction to celebrity in China. Based on the previous research results that openness and interactivity are two antecedents to PSI, and relationship-oriented factors stimulate user's engagement in turn. Regarding the mediation of openness between users, the first and second sets of research hypotheses are:

- **H1a:** Perceived openness of celebrity's Weibo posts will be positively related to PSI (COP → PSI);
- **H1b:** Perceived openness of celebrity's Weibo posts will be positively related to social media engagement (COP → EGM);
- **H1c:** PSI will be positively related to social media engagement (PSI → EGM);
- **H2a:** Perceived interactivity of celebrity's Weibo posts will be positively related to PSI (CPI → PSI);
- **H2b:** Perceived interactivity of celebrity's Weibo posts will be positively related to social media engagement (CPI → EGM).

Social media enable both active users and "lurking" to satisfy their different media consuming gratifications. Functions of Weibo enable users to comment, like, or repost celebrity's posts, and add pictures and emojis in their comments. What's more, users can even like and reply to other's user's comments, which increase the interactivity between

users (fans). Literature uses different terms, such as “passive use” “passive participation” or “lurking” to describe user’s different forms of behaviors (Men and Tsai, 2013). After reading, commenting, and liking other user’s posts on their shared celebrity’s Weibo page, users identify and develop one-sided parasocial relationships mutually (Brown et al., 2007). The mechanism of Weibo allows celebrity’s followers to active release their knowledge about their idol, and also allows users to communicate with each other under celebrity’s posts. However, there are a few pieces of research to investigate whether the parasocial relationships between followers, and user’s parasocial interaction to the celebrity would increase fan’s engagement in the celebrity’s social media page. To test the different mediation of PSR and PSI to social media engagement, the third and the fourth sets of hypotheses of this research are:

- **H3a:** Perceived openness of other user’s Weibo posts will be positively related to user-user’s PSR (UOP →PSR);
- **H3b:** Perceived openness of other user’s Weibo posts will be positively related to social media engagement (UOP →EGM);
- **H3c:** Parasocial relationship will be positively related to social media engagement (PSR →EGM);
- **H4a:** Perceived interactivity of other user’s Weibo posts will be positively related to user-user’s PSR (UPI →PSR);
- **H4b:** Perceived interactivity of other user’s Weibo posts will be positively related to social media engagement (UPI →EGM).

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized paths from celebrity's posts employ perceived openness and perceived interactivity (items CPI1- CPI5) to parasocial interaction (items PSI1-PSI5) and social media engagement (items EGM1- EGM6). It also presents the paths from other user's posts employ openness (items UOP1- UOP4) and perceived interactivity (items UPI1- UPI5) directly to the parasocial relationship (items PSR1- PSR5) and social media engagement (items EGM1- EGM6). Additionally, this model shows the mediation effect of parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship to social media engagement.

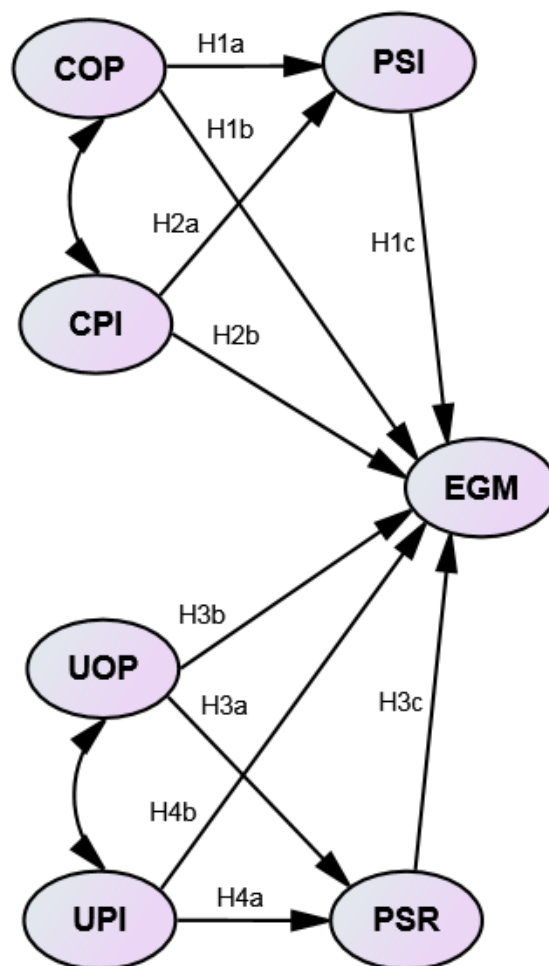


Figure 1. Research Hypotheses

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This research focused on the Weibo page of Yueming Pan, a famous actor in China, to investigate the celebrity-follower and follower-follower relationships. Pan opened his Weibo account on December 13, 2010. As of Jan. 22, 2018, his followers have reached 3.3 million. Compared to other celebrities such as Han Lu (42 million) and Mi Yang (79 million), Pan does not have the largest number of followers. However, Pan is known for his interactions with fans. He often “likes” his follower’s posts and even “steps into” his follower group to surprise his fans and facilitate discussions among them.

Design and Sample

An online survey was conducted among 595 of Pan’s Weibo followers during February 2018. Survey invitations were sent through social media, including Weibo and QQ. Data were collected through AskForm, one of the leading online survey platforms in China. The survey strictly followed the principles of IRB, and participation in the survey was voluntary.

The distributions of respondents' gender and age are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Most (96.3%) of the respondents were female and nearly 90% of them were 18-33 years old.

Table 1

Sample Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	573	96.3	96.3	98.0
	Male	12	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Missing	10	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Total	595	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Sample Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	416	69.9	69.9	69.9
	26-33	114	19.2	19.2	89.1
	34-41	40	6.7	6.7	95.8
	42-49	11	1.8	1.8	97.6
	50-57	2	0.3	0.3	98.0
	Missing	12	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	595	100.0	100.0	

Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire were first designed in English and then translated into Chinese for respondents' convenience. Instructions, including the informed consent, were presented before participants answered the questionnaire. The survey contained 38 questions and took approximately 15 minutes to be completed. Both of the English and Chinese versions of the questionnaire are provided in the appendix.

Measurement

The questionnaire contained measures of the following seven variables as below.

Perceived openness of celebrity's posts (COP) was adapted and modified from Labrecque (2014), and contained four Likert-scale questions: "[Celebrity]'s posts are open in sharing his/her life," "[Celebrity]'s posts keep me well informed about his/her work," "[Celebrity]'s posts don't hold back his/her information," and "[Celebrity]'s posts are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness".

Perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts (CPI) was measured by five Likert-scale questions modified from Song and Zinkhan (2008), Thorson and Rodgers (2006), and Willoughby and L'Engle (2015): "[Celebrity] reads what I post on his/her page," "[Celebrity] was able to respond to follower's specific questions or requirement," "[Celebrity] makes me feel like I directly communicate with he/she," "[Celebrity] will "like" my posts if my comments are unique," and "[Celebrity] will repost my posts about he/she if my posts are unique."

Parasocial Interaction (PSI) was measured by five Likert-scale questions extracted from Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985): “[Celebrity] makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend,” “When I interact with [Celebrity], I feel included,” “I care about what happens to [Celebrity]” “I hope [celebrity] can achieve his/her goals,” and “If [Celebrity] achieve his/her goals, I will feel happy.”

Perceived openness of other users’ posts (UOP) was measured by four Likert-scale questions modified from Labrecque (2014): “Other user’s posts are open in sharing their opinion,” “Other user’s posts keep me well informed about that celebrity,” “Other user’s posts don’t hold back their knowledge about that celebrity,” and “Other user’s posts are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness to that celebrity.”

Perceived interactivity of other users’ posts (UPI) was measured by five Likert-scale items adapted from Labrecque (2014), Song and Zinkhan (2008), and Thorson and Rodgers (2006): “Other user read what I post under his/her comments,” “Other user will respond to my questions about that celebrity,” “Other user make me feel like I directly communicate with he/she,” “Other user will “like” my posts if my comments are unique,” and “Other user will repost my posts about he/she if my he/she agrees with my opinion about that celebrity.”

Parasocial relationship (PSR) with other users was tested by five Likert-scale questions, modified from Yuan, Kim, and Kim (2016), Gleitman and Gleitman (1997), Koeppel et al. (1993), Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003), and Rust et al. (2004): “Other user personalize my knowledge to that [celebrity],” “Interactivity between users make me feel more closely related to that [celebrity],” “Other users make me feel like that I’m part

of them,” “The information about [celebrity] provided by other user interest me,” and “I can get more insights about [celebrity] from other user.”

Social media (Weibo) engagement (EGM) was measured by six Likert-scale questions modified from Men and Tsai (2012): “I’m willing to read [celebrity]’s posts and other user’s comments,” “I’m willing to view pictures on [celebrity]’s Weibo page, or on other user’s comments,” “I’m willing to watch videos on [celebrity]’s Weibo page,” “I’m willing to engaging in the discussion on [celebrity]’s Weibo page (e.g. commenting, and conversation with other users),” “I’m willing to repost [celebrity]’s posts,” and “I’m willing to “like” [celebrity]’s posts.”

CHAPTER FIVE:
RESULTS

Table 3 displays the Cronbach's Alphas and the number of items of each factor. All Cronbach's Alphas were equal or greater than .70, indicating that items of all factors attained acceptable levels of internal consistency. According to Wrench et al., (2008), Cronbach's alphas between .70 and .80 are acceptable for measurement.

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the 38 items. Nearly all means of 35 items were between 4 and 5 on the five-point Likert scale, indicating respondents' general agreement to the statements.

Table 3

Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
COP	.700	4
CPI	.722	5
PSI	.739	5
UOP	.802	4
UPI	.858	5
PSR	.828	5
EGM	.810	6

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std.Dev.
[Celebrity]'s posts are open in sharing his/her life	4.6471	.66399
[Celebrity]'s posts keep me well informed about his/her work	4.4118	.68426
[Celebrity]'s posts don't hold back his/her information	3.7916	.95537
[Celebrity]'s posts are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness	4.5160	.60386
[Celebrity] reads what I post on his/her page	3.9059	1.03697
[Celebrity] was able to respond	4.4807	.64161
[Celebrity] makes me feel like I directly communicate with him	4.3966	.77676
[Celebrity] will "like" my post/comment if my comments are unique	4.4504	.75130
[Celebrity] will repost my post/comment about him if my posts are unique	3.0202	1.06344
[Celebrity] makes me feel comfortable as if I am with a friend	4.7076	.57019
When I interact with [Celebrity] I feel included	4.7277	.49898
I care about what happens to [Celebrity]	4.7361	.53430
I hope [celebrity] can achieve his/her goals	4.9261	.28053
If [Celebrity] achieve his/her goals, I will feel happy	4.9513	.21550
Other users' posts/comments are open in sharing their opinion	4.3933	.66915
Other users' posts/comments keep me well informed about [Celebrity]	4.4706	.65935
Other users' posts/comments don't hold back their knowledge	4.3227	.72247
Other users' posts/comments are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness to that celebrity	4.6303	.56356
Other users read what I post under their comments	4.3193	.70511
Other users will respond to my questions about [Celebrity]	4.4521	.62413
Other users make me feel like I directly communicate with them	4.4118	.70127
Other users will "like" my posts if my comments are unique	4.6218	.57136
Other users will repost my posts about [Celebrity]	4.4504	.69545
Other users personalize the information about [Celebrity]	4.0571	.89899
Interactivity between users make me feel more closely related to [Celebrity]	4.5697	.62745
Other users make me feel that I'm part of [Celebrity]'s team	4.3613	.79488
The information about [Celebrity] provided by other users interest me	4.6521	.53021
I can get more insights about [Celebrity] from other users	4.5866	.64392
I'm willing to read [Celebrity]'s posts, or user comments on his/her Weibo page	4.7025	.52279
I'm willing to view pictures on [Celebrity]'s Weibo page, or on other user's comments	4.7361	.52154
I'm willing to watch videos on [Celebrity]'s Weibo page	4.8000	.44419
I'm willing to engaging in the discussion on [Celebrity]'s Weibo page	4.6134	.67556
I'm willing to repost [Celebrity]'s posts on my Weibo page	4.6000	.70925
I'm willing to "like" [celebrity]'s Weibo page	4.8908	.33810

Measurement Model Results

Table 5 presents the standardized regression weights of individual items estimated from structural equation model analysis. All estimates were statistically significant ($p < .001$). Additionally, the standard errors were small, indicating the acceptable validity of the measurement model.

Table 5

Measurement Model Results

			Standardized Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
COP1	<---	COP	.597			
COP2	<---	COP	.669	.102	11.351	***
COP3	<---	COP	.593	.135	10.568	***
COP4	<---	COP	.619	.087	10.859	***
CPI5	<---	CPI	.434			
CPI4	<---	CPI	.647	.118	8.949	***
CPI3	<---	CPI	.748	.134	9.378	***
CPI2	<---	CPI	.593	.095	8.634	***
CPI1	<---	CPI	.598	.155	8.666	***
PSI1	<---	PSI	.722			
PSI2	<---	PSI	.679	.056	14.574	***
PSI3	<---	PSI	.574	.060	12.487	***
PSI4	<---	PSI	.624	.031	13.501	***
PSI5	<---	PSI	.645	.024	13.919	***
UOP3	<---	UOP	.719	.083	15.705	***
UOP2	<---	UOP	.769	.077	17.066	***
UOP1	<---	UOP	.654	.076	14.181	***

Table 5 (continued)

			Standardized Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
UPI5	<---	UPI	.646			
UPI4	<---	UPI	.685	.060	14.377	***
UPI3	<---	UPI	.753	.076	15.623	***
UPI2	<---	UPI	.847	.070	17.152	***
UPI1	<---	UPI	.751	.076	15.688	***
PSR1	<---	PSR	.526			
PSR2	<---	PSR	.804	.081	13.027	***
PSR3	<---	PSR	.711	.096	12.135	***
PSR4	<---	PSR	.797	.068	13.010	***
PSR5	<---	PSR	.798	.083	13.009	***
EGM1	<---	EGM	.736			
EGM2	<---	EGM	.727	.060	16.378	***
EGM3	<---	EGM	.708	.051	15.975	***
EGM4	<---	EGM	.607	.079	13.736	***
EGM5	<---	EGM	.488	.084	11.040	***
EGM6	<---	EGM	.487	.040	11.006	***
UOP4	<---	UOP	.719			

Structural Model Results

Table 6 shows the results of the structural model obtained through SPSS AMOS. An initial question is whether the structural equation analysis estimates for the model provide the adequate fit to the data. Although the Chi-square test indicates lack of model fit ($X^2 = 1405.819$, $df = 516$, $p = .000$), it should be noted that the Chi-square test is sensitive to large sample sizes like the one employed in the present study. Assessment of the model's fit thus

relied on other goodness-of-fit indices. Byrne (2001) suggests that models with GFI and CFI values greater than .90, and RMSEA less than or equal to .10 be judged as providing a reasonable fit to the data. Similarly, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend RMSEA values below .06. In this study, all these goodness-of-fit measures (GFI = 0.902; CFI = 0.920, RMSEA = .048) indicate that the model provides acceptable fit to the data. Figure 2 is a pictorial display of the structural model results.

Table 6

Structural Model Results

			Standardized Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
PSI	<---	COP	.353	.079	4.655	***
PSI	<---	CPI	.397	.072	4.951	***
PSR	<---	UPI	.319	.066	5.151	***
PSR	<---	UOP	.585	.089	7.882	***
EGM	<---	COP	.089	.061	1.323	.186
EGM	<---	CPI	-.246	.056	-3.444	***
EGM	<---	PSI	.543	.060	7.923	***
EGM	<---	UOP	-.059	.080	-.665	.506
EGM	<---	PSR	.639	.076	6.346	***
EGM	<---	UPI	.102	.053	1.528	.127
COP	<-->	CPI	.653	.017	6.892	***
UOP	<-->	UPI	.739	.013	9.997	***

*** p < .001, Chi-square = 1405.819, df = 516, p = .000,

GFI = .902, CFI = .920, NFI = .878, RMSEA = .048

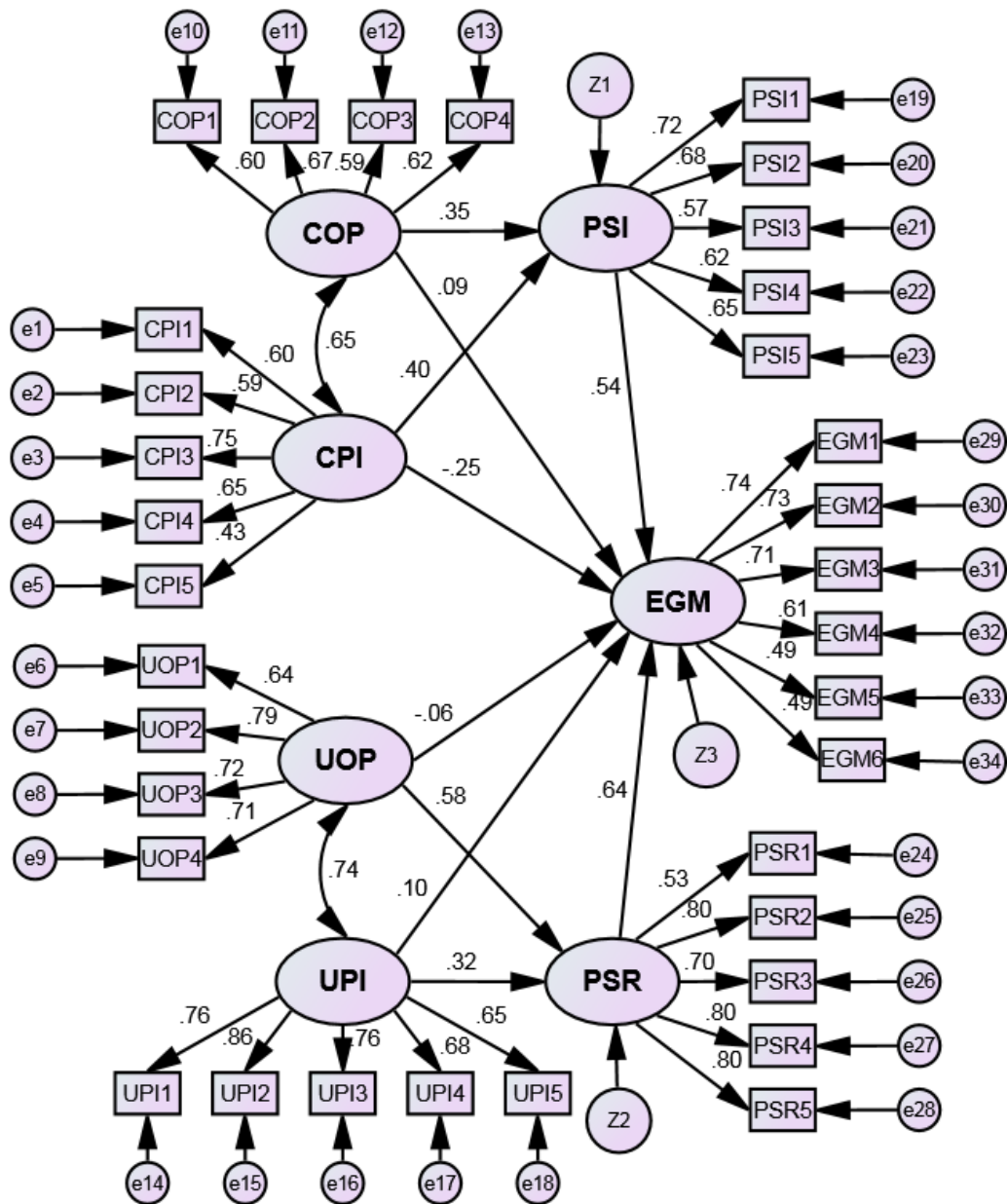


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

Hypotheses Testing

The first set of research hypotheses states the relationships between COP, PSI, and EGM. H1a states that there is a positive relationship between the openness of celebrity's Weibo posts and parasocial interaction (COP → PSI), H1b states that celebrity posts'

openness and Weibo engagement are positively related (COP → EGM), and H1c states that parasocial interaction will be positively related to Weibo engagement (PSI → EGM). H1a was supported by the positive regression coefficient estimate ($\beta = .353, p < .01$) between COP and PSI; thus the higher the perceived openness of celebrity's Weibo posts, the higher the perceived parasocial interaction. H1b was not supported by the results ($\beta = .089, p = .186$), however, H1c was supported by the positive regression coefficient between PSI and EGM ($\beta = .543, p < .001$), indicating that the higher the parasocial interaction, the greater engagement with the celebrity's Weibo page. It should be noted that support for H1a (COP → PSI) and H1c (PSI → EGM) jointly provided support for the mediating role of PSI (COP → PSI → EGM).

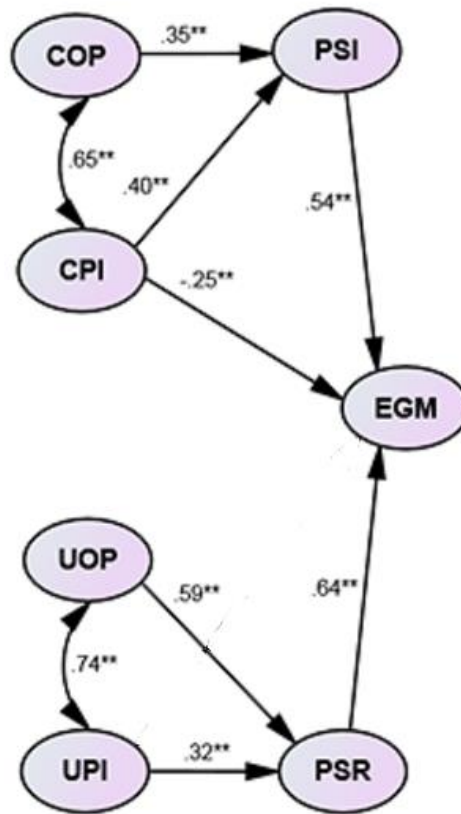
The second set of hypotheses deal with the relationships among CPI, PSI, and EGM. H2a states that the perceived interactivity of celebrity's Weibo page is positively related to parasocial interaction (CPI → PSI). The hypothesis was supported by the positive path coefficient ($\beta = .397, p < .01$). Similar to the COP → PSI → EGM relationship reported above, the relationship between CPI and EGM was also mediated by PSI (CPI → PSI → EGM). H2b hypothesized the positive relationship between perceived interactivity and Weibo media engagement (CPI → EGM). Results showed that the relationship was significant but negative ($\beta = -.246, p < .01$). H2b was thus not supported.

The third set of research hypotheses deal with the relationships among UOP, PSI, and EGM. H3a states that there is a positive relationship between the perceived openness of other users' Weibo posts and the parasocial relationship among users (UOP → PSI). H3b states that

perceived openness of other users' Weibo posts is positively related to Weibo engagement (UOP → EGM). H3c states that parasocial relationship is positively related to Weibo engagement (PSR → EGM). H3a was supported by the positive regression coefficient between UOP and PSR ($\beta = .585, p < .001$): the higher the perceived openness of other users' posts, the higher the parasocial relationship among users. H3c was also supported by the positive regression coefficient between PSR and EGM ($\beta = .639, p < .01$): the higher parasocial relationship among users, the greater engagement with celebrity's Weibo page. However, H3b was not supported by the results ($\beta = -.059, p = .506$). Together, support for H3a (UOP → PSR) and H3c (PSR → EGM) lend support for the mediating role of PSR in the relationship between UOP and EGM (UOP → PSR → EGM).

The fourth set of hypotheses is about the relationships among UPI, PSR, and EGM. H4a states that there is a positive relationship between perceived interactivity of other users' Weibo posts and the perceived parasocial relationship among users (UPI → PSR). The hypothesis was supported by the positive regression coefficient ($\beta = .319, p < .01$). H2b hypothesizes that perceived interactivity of other user's Weibo posts would be positively related to Weibo engagement (UPI → EGM). Results of the structural modeling analysis, however, failed to support the hypothesis ($\beta = .102, p = .127$). Nevertheless, similar to the UOP → PSR → EGM relationship, PSR played a significant mediating role in the relationship between UPI and EGM (UPI → PSR → EGM).

Figure 3 presents all of the statistically significant paths in the structural model.



** p < .01

Figure 3. Significant Paths

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 7 shows the summary of all of the hypotheses testing results. All of the hypotheses were supported by the model results, except H1b, H2b, H3b, and H4b, which hypothesized that posts employ openness and perceived interactivity have direct effects on EGM. In contrast, the results as a whole provided strong support for the mediating role of PSI and PSR.

Table 7

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1a	Celebrity's Weibo posts employ openness will be positively related to PSI	Supported
H1b	Celebrity's Weibo posts employ openness will be positively related to social media engagement	Not supported
H1c	PSI will be positively related to social media engagement	Supported
H2a	Celebrity's Weibo posts employ perceived interactivity will be positively related to PSI	Supported
H2b	Celebrity's Weibo posts employ perceived interactivity will be positively related to social media engagement	Not supported
H3a	Other user's posts employ openness will be positively related to user-user's PSR	Supported
H3b	Other user's posts employ openness will be positively related to social media engagement	Not supported
H3c	Parasocial relationship will be positively related to social media engagement	Supported
H4a	Other user's posts employ perceived interactivity will be positively related to user-user's PSR	Supported
H4b	Other user's posts employ perceived interactivity will be positively related to social media engagement	Not supported

CHAPTER SIX:

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the current ecosystem of celebrity-fans social media community in China and to explore the effective way to promote the fans' engagement in order to intensify the celebrity-fans bonding. The author was interested in the way posts to employ openness and perceived interactivity lead to social media engagement, in the context of a Chinese celebrity's Weibo page. Results demonstrated that neither celebrity's nor other user's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity direct lead to user's Weibo engagement. However, the user's greater Weibo engagement is attained with the mediating role of parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship, which could be produced from celebrity's and other user's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity. In other words, the more users feel the openness and perceived interactivity from celebrity's posts and other user's posts, the celebrity's and other user's posts, the higher parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship they feel with the celebrity or other users, the more they engage in celebrity's Weibo page.

In this study, two separate but related models were tested: direct paths from openness and perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts to social media engagement, and mediated paths of openness and perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts to PSI and to social media

engagement; the other model deals with the paths of openness and perceived interactivity of other user's posts and social media engagement, and mediated paths from other user's posts to PSR and to social media engagement. Results did not support the direct paths from either celebrity's or other user's posts to social media engagement, but indeed supported the paths with the mediating role of PSI and PSR:

- Openness of Celebrity's Posts → Parasocial interaction;
- Perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts → Parasocial interaction;
- Parasocial interaction → Social Media Engagement;
- Openness of Celebrity's Posts → Parasocial interaction → Social Media Engagement;
- Perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts → Parasocial interaction → social media engagement;
- Openness of Other User's Posts → Parasocial Relationship;
- Perceived Interactivity of Other User's Posts → Parasocial Relationship;
- Parasocial Relationship → Social Media Engagement;
- Openness of Other User's Posts → Parasocial Relationship → Social Media Engagement;
- Perceived Interactivity of Other User's Posts → Parasocial Relationship → Social Media Engagement.

The mediating role of PSI and PSR in this research provides support for Labrecque's (2014) study and Wisneski's (2015) study that PSI plays a vital role in mediating consumer-

brand relationships and TV viewing loyalty. Similar to Wisneski's research statement that loyalty should be viewed as a process, the social media engagement should also be seen as an enduring process. In the earlier media context, perceptions of openness and interactivity were increased by some unique techniques in the program, such as adjusting the camera angles, character directly addressing the audience, and frank communication (Horton and Wohl, 1956). In the current social media context, mere openness or perceived interactivity would not lead to user's enthusiasm to engage in idol's page. What's more, the perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts even has a negative relationship with user's engagement. That means, if the message and style of celebrity's posts employ perceived interactivity, user's passion on engaging in this page would be strongly weakened. Factors in this research suggest that the openness and perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts should try to make users feel included, such as they have some common features with that celebrity, sharing a goal he/she is trying to attain, even some problems he/she is experiencing, building more parasocial relationship with followers.

Compared to the earlier research, this study considers PSR with other users as a key factor in increasing social media engagement. Parallel to the first model in this research, the second model supports the mediating role of PSR between openness and perceived interactivity of other user's posts and social media engagement. Openness and the perceived interactivity of other user's posts do not directly lead to user's social media engagement. As part of celebrity's social media page, other user's comment and presence strongly affect user's opinion and engaging activity. Similar to the interactivity of fans' online community,

this research emphasized the openness of Weibo, such as easiness to present user's attitude toward other's posts, no restriction to reading other's posts, and availability to participate in other's conversation about the celebrity. Results indicate that the more openness and perceived interactivity they feel from other user's posts, the greater PSR they have with others, which in turn increase user's engagement. To some degree, PSR with other users is more attainable than PSI with the celebrity, due to the more attainable level of openness and perceived interactivity between users. It's more likely for users to share information about their lives, and to interact with other users, thus increasing their engagement in celebrity's social media page.

Theoretical Contributions

This study supports the previous findings that openness and perceived interactivity are antecedents for PSI and PSR (Labrecque, 2014; Thorson and Rodger, 2006). It presents the strong interactivity of social media and emphasizes both the celebrity-user and user-user relationships are important for user's engagement. The supported hypotheses indicate that both of the functions and messages on social media should be built for the interactive and relational purpose so that users would like to participate in engagement.

By examining the correlation between posts and user's engagement, this study demonstrates that not all posts employ openness, and perceived interactivity lead to user's engagement. Although the antecedent posts could be presented in different communicative style, the more parasocial feeling they produce, the more engagement users would pour in.

What's more, if the posts employ openness and perceived interactivity were not built for PSI or PSR, it might repress user's engagement. For celebrity branding, personal branding, or marketing purposes, this study provides insights into the acting point they should emphasize.

This study also contributes to expanding the scope of parasocial related literature by detailing the PSR process. Previous studies state that PSI and PSR were different since one happened in the communication process and the other was the outcome of communication (McDonald, and Hu, 2005). The analysis of the current research reveals that both PSI and PSR could be the outcomes of communication, and both of them have mediation effects on social media engagement. This research also verified that the illusionary friendly one-sided feeling not only happens between media consumer and media personae, but also appears between media users.

Practical Implications

Social media is widely used for many purposes in today's marketing place. Due to the positive effect of social media engagement on loyalty, celebrities, companies, even personal accounts should design the messages they send to followers to increase fan's social media page engagement. In this research, it indicates that posts that featured openness and perceived interactivity do not directly lead to social media engagement, and even decrease it. Results call for efficient forms and messages sent to followers, to build close PSI between celebrity and followers. On Weibo, it is less likely for one celebrity to repost user's posts about

himself/herself, but there are some other ways to increase PSI. The following are some suggestions for that:

- Posts cue for parallels between celebrity and users to attain empathy;
- Posts reply to one user's or fans group's specific demand, such as place of a selfie, attend a restaurant they recommend, or buy something they recommend;
- Record the process that he/she achieved a goal, even some obstacles they meet;
- Reply to or like several follower's comments under his/her own posts; the limited reply will lead to follower's treasure.

There is one survey question to ask participant's opinion about celebrity's level of hold back information. Several participants mentioned their concerns about celebrity's privacy. Moreover, they agree that the celebrity has to protect his/her privacy to some degree. It reveals that followers respect to celebrity's protection of privacy. Accordingly, celebrities could:

- Present his/her real attitude toward one thing, and that will indicate his/her realness and frankness.

Regarding PSR, although it is harder for celebrity or brand to design user's posts, this research provides evidence to develop more interactive functions between users to keep high social media engagement and loyalty. In this study, it indicates that the dialogue and group functions of Weibo enable users to build PSR between users. Additionally, social media could enable users to express different layers of their lives to increase their information of

openness, and develop more interactive functions to promote perceived interactivity, so that is convenient for users to build PSR online.

Limitations and Direction for Further Research

Notwithstanding its contributions, the current study bears several limitations. First, the study was based on a convenient sample of users of a single celebrity Weibo site, and consequently, its results have limited generalizability. More research based on random samples from a larger number of celebrity websites is therefore needed. Second, gender distribution indicates that the majority participants (96.3%) of this quantitative research were female followers of one celebrity. If it comes with one female celebrity and her male followers, the level and feature of PSI might be changed. Future research to investigate the qualitative difference between male/female celebrities, and female/male followers is needed. Third, the survey data and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis used in this study dealt with correlation, not causation (Everitt and Dunn, 2010).

This research indicates the mediation effect of PSI and PSR between posts to social media engagement, but it does not analyze the type and the content of the posts. For instance, one of the survey questions is about celebrity's information on their posts, and some respondents mentioned that the definition of that "information" was not clear. One respondent argued that a celebrity could hide his/her personal information since he/she should protect privacy. Future research may detail discuss the post with openness and perceived interactivity, to explore the type and efficiency of posts content.

Results indicate that perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts and user's social media has the negative relationship. However, PSI transmits the negative relationship to positive one, in other words, PSI balance the passive effect of perceived interactivity of celebrity's posts to user's social media engagement. Research to investigate the reason why the negative correlation is needed.

Although this research mentions that both PSI and PSR mediate the effect of social media engagement, it does not discuss the difference between them. Future research may explore more about how PSI and PSR affect the engagement, and to investigate the relationship between PSI and PSR. Moreover, researchers may discuss the PSR between different levels of engaged social media users, such as activist and lurking.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS

Social media is an ideal tool for companies, organizations, and even persons to build intimate bonding with their followers. Research indicates that engagement is positively related to loyalty. This study tries to investigate the mediating role of parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship between celebrity's and other user's posts, and user's engagement. Results indicate that celebrity's posts employ openness and perceived interactivity do not directly lead to user's engagement, but PSI produced from this posts have a positive relationship with user's engagement. Relatively, PSR, promoted from posts employ openness and perceived interactivity have the positive relationship with user's engagement, which also supported the mediating role of PSR in social media engagement.

The mediating role of PSI and PSR suggest that engagement is a process, and should be developed step by step. Additionally, it indicates that the engagement is promoted by two separate factors, one comes from the interaction between celebrity and follower, and the other produced from the relationship between followers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire (English)

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Pro # 00034234

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study. We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: I'm Your Fan – Engaging in Celebrity's Social Media Page with the Mediation of Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship. The person who is in charge of this research study is Jiahui Zhuang. This person is called the Principal Investigator.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the interaction between celebrity and their followers on Weibo, the relationship between followers on Weibo, and to investigate whether parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship work as mediation to user's social media engagement.

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a celebrity's follower on Weibo.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an online survey. The data is collected anonymously. You will be asked about your attitude toward the celebrity you follow, attitude toward other followers, and your feeling about your interaction and relationship. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer; you are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits and Risks

You will receive no benefit from this study. This research is considered to be minimal risk.

Compensation

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online.

Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB), Principal Investigator, advising professor, and defense committees.

- It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. If you complete and submit an anonymous survey and later request your data be withdrawn, this may or may not be possible as the researcher may be unable to extract anonymous data from the database.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu. If you have questions regarding the research, please contact the Principal Investigator at jjahuizhuang@mail.usf.edu.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can print a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this survey that I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

The link to this survey is: <http://app.askform.cn/ea9dc4be-c29e-4050-944a-5c7041968245.aspx>

Q1. My gender is:

1. Male 2. Female 3. No response

Q2. My age range is:

1. 18-25 2. 26-33 3. 34-41 4. 42-49
5. 50-57 6. 58-65 7. 66+ 8.No response

Q3. Compared with browsing other's Weibo, I create Weibo content and communicate with other more

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q4. Compared with Weibo content creation and communication, I browse other's Weibo more

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q5. [Celebrity]'s posts are open in sharing his/her life

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q6. [Celebrity]'s posts keep me well informed about his/her work

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q7. [Celebrity]’s posts don’t hold back his/her information

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q8. [Celebrity]’s posts are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q9. [Celebrity] reads what I post on his/her page

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q10. [Celebrity] was able to respond to follower’s specific questions or requirement

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q11. [Celebrity] makes me feel like I directly communicate with he/she

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q12. [Celebrity] will “like” my post/comment if my comments are unique

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q13. [Celebrity] will repost my post/comment about he/she if my posts are unique

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q14. [Celebrity] makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q15. When I interact with [Celebrity], I feel included

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q16. I care about what happens to [Celebrity]

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q17. I hope [celebrity] can achieve his/her goals

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q18. If [Celebrity] achieve his/her goals, I will feel happy

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q19. Other user's posts/comments are open in sharing their opinion

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q20. Other user's posts/comments keep me well informed about that celebrity

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q21. Other user's posts/comments don't hold back their knowledge about that celebrity

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q22. Other user's posts/comments are open in expressing his/her emotions/likeness to that celebrity

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q23. Other user read what I post under his/her comments

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q24. Other user will respond to my questions about that celebrity

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q25. Other user make me feel like I directly communicate with he/she

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q26. Other user will "like" my posts if my comments are unique

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q27. Other user will repost my posts if he/she agrees with my comments about that celebrity

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q28. Other user personalize my knowledge to that [celebrity]

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q29. Interactivity between users make me feel more closely related to that [celebrity]

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q30. Other user make me feel like that I'm part of them

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q31. The information about [celebrity] provided by other user interest me

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q32. I can get more insights about [celebrity] from other user

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q33. I'm willing to read [celebrity]'s posts and other user's comments

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q34. I'm willing to view pictures on [celebrity]'s Weibo page, or on other user's comments

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q35. I'm willing to watch videos on [celebrity]'s Weibo page

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q36. I'm willing to engaging in the discussion on [celebrity]'s Weibo page (e.g. commenting, and conversation with other users)

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q37. I'm willing to repost [celebrity]'s posts

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Q38. I'm willing to "like" [celebrity]'s posts

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire (Chinese)

参与研究知情同意书 参与此次调查研究前需知晓的信息

Pro# 00034234

你好，您正被邀请参与一项调查研究：我是你的粉一在范社会互动和范社会关系的中介效应下参与明星的微博页面。您被邀请是因为您是微博上某位明星的粉丝。请您在同意参与调查问卷前仔细阅读以下内容并提出任何疑问。

本研究关于：本研究的目的是了解明星及粉丝间的互动，粉丝间的关系，并探究该互动和关系如何影响社交媒体用户的参与度。

您如何参与：如果您同意参与此次调查，您将会填写一份网上调查问卷。该问卷的问题将询问您关于明星的态度，您对于其他粉丝的态度，以及您对明星一粉丝的互动及粉丝一粉丝关系的感受。完成本次问卷将需要 15 分钟左右。您将匿名参与本次调查。

风险及利益：参与本次调查不会有任何风险。您的个人信息不会被收集，您的参与也是完全匿名的。同时，您的参与不会获得任何报酬。

参与是自愿的：参与本次调查是完全自愿的。您可以在回答问卷过程中随时退出。

隐私及机密性：我们会尽可能保护您的隐私。一些人可能会看到您的研究记录。根据相关法律，任何看到您记录的人都应保持信息的机密性。获准看到这些记录的人包括：南佛罗里达大学的审查委员会，主要调查人员，指导老师，及答辩委员。

如果您有任何有关您参与权的问题：您可以联系南佛罗里达大学审查委员会（813）974-5638 或发送邮件至 RSCHIRB@usf.edu。如果您有任何关于本研究的问题，可发邮件至 jiahuizhuang@mail.usf.edu 来联系作者。

如果您年满 18 岁，并同意参与此次调查，请点击“开始”按钮并开始回答问卷。如果您未年满 18 岁，或不愿参与此次调查，请离开本页面。

本次调查问卷的链接是：<http://app.askform.cn/ea9dc4be-c29e-4050-944a-5c7041968245.aspx>

调查问卷

Q1. 我的性别是:

1. 男性
2. 女性
3. 不回答

Q2. 我的年龄是:

1. 18-25
2. 26-33
3. 34-41
4. 42-49
5. 50-57
6. 58-65
7. 66+
8. 不回答

Q3. 相比于浏览他人的微博, 我更多地创作微博内容, 与别人交流

1. 非常不同意
2. 不同意
3. 中立
4. 同意
5. 非常同意

Q4. 相比于创作微博内容和与别人交流, 我更多地在浏览他人的微博

1. 非常不同意
2. 不同意
3. 中立
4. 同意
5. 非常同意

Q5. [TA] 的微博乐于分享自己的生活

1. 非常不同意
2. 不同意
3. 中立
4. 同意
5. 非常同意

Q6. [TA] 的微博使我能很好了解 TA 的工作

1. 非常不同意
2. 不同意
3. 中立
4. 同意
5. 非常同意

Q7. [TA] 的微博不会隐瞒自己的信息

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q8. [TA] 的微博乐于表达自己的情感 / 喜好

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q9. [TA] 会读我的留言

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q10. [TA] 会回应粉丝的一些问题或要求

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q11. [TA] 使我感到我们是直接交流的

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q12. 如果我的微博 / 留言内容特别, [TA]会为我点赞

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q13. 如果我的微博 / 留言内容特别, [TA]会转发

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q14. [TA] 像朋友一样使我感到很亲切

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q15. 当 [TA] 与我有互动, 我会感到有参与感

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q16. 我在意 [TA] 的动向

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q17. 我希望 [TA] 能达到他的目标

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q18. 如果 [TA] 能达到他的目标, 我会为他高兴

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q19. 其他粉丝的微博 / 留言乐于分享自己的观点

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q20. 其他粉丝的微博 / 留言使我很好地了解 [TA]

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q21. 其他粉丝的微博 / 留言不会隐瞒对 [TA] 的认识

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q22. 其他粉丝的微博 / 留言乐于表达自己对 TA 的情感 / 喜好

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q23. 其他粉丝会阅读我给他们的留言

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q24. 其他粉丝会回应我有关 TA 的问题

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q25. 其他粉丝使我感到我们之间是直接交流的

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q26. 如果我给 [TA] 的留言内容特别, 其他粉丝会为我点赞

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q27. 如果其他粉丝同意我关于 [TA] 的微博 / 留言, 他们会转发

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q28. 其他粉丝个性化了我对 [TA] 的认识

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q29. 粉丝之间的互动使我对 [TA] 感到更亲近了

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q30. 其他粉丝使我感到我是他们中的一员

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q31. 其他粉丝提供的有关 [TA] 的消息使我感兴趣

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q32. 其他粉丝使我更深入地了解 [TA]

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q33. 我愿意阅读 [TA] 的微博和其他粉丝的留言

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q34. 我愿意观赏 [TA] 发的图片和其他粉丝留言中的图片

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q35. 我愿意观看 [TA] 主页中的视频

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q36. 我愿意参与 [TA] 微博主页，如留言，和其他粉丝对话

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q37. 我愿意转发 [TA] 的微博

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Q38. 我愿意给 [TA] 的微博点赞

1. 非常不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 非常同意

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approved Letter



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

2/15/2018

Jiahui Zhuang
School of Advertising and Mass Communications
4202 E Fowler Ave.
CIS1040
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Exempt Certification**

IRB#: Pro00034234

Title: I'm Your Fan – Engaging in Celebrity's Social Media Page with the Mediation of Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship

Dear Mrs. Zhuang:

On 2/15/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University

of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'S'.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board