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The Impact of Language on Branding: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In an era where consumers are presented with vast choices, effective communication is of utmost importance for brands that desire to establish meaningful connections with consumers and set a strong presence in the market. This study explores the multifaceted relationship between linguistic elements and brand identity, focusing on how strategic linguistic choices play an important role in shaping consumer behavior and enhancing brand engagement and visibility. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of language on brand perception. This paper aims to provide insights into how brands can leverage language to strengthen their market position and resonate with target audiences. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative content analysis of branding case studies with quantitative surveys assessing consumer responses to different linguistic strategies and qualitative surveys providing empirical data on consumer preferences and perceptions related to branding language. In analyzing linguistic strategies and their effectiveness in enhancing brand identity and consumer loyalty, this research is guided by semiotics theory, which examines how signs and symbols convey meaning, and social identity theory, which explores how language shapes group dynamics and brand affiliation. The findings show that the strategic use of language in branding helps brands make meaningful connections, convey their values effectively, and adapt to changing market dynamics, ultimately leading to greater branding success. This paper provides actionable insights for brands aiming to cultivate a compelling and resonant brand narrative and differentiate themselves in an ever-evolving competitive market.

Keywords: Brand identity; Brand engagement; Consumer perception; Linguistic strategies; Branding language

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 25 February 2025 | Revised: 25 March 2025 | Accepted: 28 March 2025 | Published Online: 6 April 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.55121/le.v2i1.250

CITATION

Musonda, N., Siame, P., 2025. The Impact of Language on Branding: A Comprehensive Analysis. Linguistic Exploration. 2(1): 37–46.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.55121/le.v2i1.250

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1. Introduction

In the ever-changing landscape of branding, language plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and fostering brand loyalty. Language plays a crucial role in branding strategies, influencing consumer perceptions, emotions, and attitudes towards brands. The interaction between language and branding is a dynamic field of study, with implications for marketing, psychology, linguistics, and communication. Schoorsmans [1] highlights that language operates not merely as a communicative tool but as a cultural artifact, encapsulating the values, beliefs, and identities of a consumer group. At the heart of branding lies the ability to convey a unique identity and value proposition that resonates with consumers. The effectiveness of branding often hinges on its ability to evoke emotions.

According to Keller [2], the power of a brand lies in what resides in the minds of consumers. Thus, the strategic use of language can enhance engagement with consumers create an emotional connection with them, and ultimately influence their purchasing decisions. This implies that language serves as a powerful tool that enables companies to establish a distinct tone, voice, and personality that differentiates their brand in a competitive market. Whether through brand names, taglines, advertising copy, or social media content, the language used by brands serves as a gateway to the consumers' minds and hearts. Brands can leverage language to highlight their strengths, address consumer needs, and portray a distinct brand image. Moreover, the tone and style of language can convey specific brand attributes, such as sophistication, innovation, or reliability, further influencing consumer perceptions and preferences.

The impact of language on consumer behavior in the context of branding is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon, influenced by psychological, sociological, and cultural factors. Understanding how language shapes consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions is key to developing effective branding strategies that drive engagement and loyalty. Therefore, this study delves into the intricate relationship between language and branding strategies and explores how linguistic nuances impact consumer behavior and brand success.

2. Literature Review

Language plays a crucial role in branding as it shapes consumer perceptions and branding positioning. The interplay between language and branding has become an essential area of study within marketing and communications. Usunier and Shaner [3] argue that language can assist in making better brand names. The duo contends that brand names have to be linguistically adaptable in the global market. This literature shows that there is an interface between language and branding. It can be argued that marketers are expected to choose the correct and suitable language for the brand consumers. These findings motivated the present undertaking to establish the impact of language on branding.

In related literature, Carnevale et al. [4] opine that language use has given rise to the linguistic field called "brand linguistics." The trio has argued that brand linguistics examines the relationship between language in the brand name and the impact it has on the consumer. The scholars further argue that brand linguistics differs from other fields associated with linguistics in that it focuses on the consumer as a unit of analysis and uses an interdisciplinary approach to compute the results. This literature is insightful in the present study that discusses the impact of language on selected brand names globally.

As brands seek to differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace, the importance of language, both verbal and visual, has intensified. This literature review synthesizes key findings in the field of marketing and communication, drawing on various studies that explore the role of language in brand identity, consumer perception, and overall brand performance. Brand equity is largely shaped by brand awareness and brand associations, both of which are influenced by the language used in branding efforts. Keller, [2] states that a brand name, logo, and advertising language can create a strong image in the consumer's mind, leading to favorable associations. This underscores the notion that language is a critical tool in shaping brand perception. Further exploration by Aaker [5] emphasizes the role of brand personality in this dynamic. Aaker [5] argues that brands can be imbued with human-like characteristics through carefully chosen language, tuning consumer senti-

ments to align with those characteristics. For example, a brand presenting itself with playful language may be perceived as more youthful and innovative, while one with formal language could enhance perceptions of reliability and professionalism.

Brand identity is inherently tied to the language used in branding communications. Rego & Lemos [6] explain that the choice of linguistic elements forms a narrative that communicates what the brand stands for and its core values. This shows that effective brand narratives constructed through strategic linguistic choices can evoke emotions and foster relationships between consumers and brands. This is particularly relevant in the context of digital marketing, where language can create immediate engagement. Merrilees et al. [7] assert that the integration of language into branding strategies can enhance consumer attachment and loyalty. Their study suggests that brands that employ a consistent linguistic style across various channels can cultivate a sense of familiarity and trust among consumers. This leads to the conclusion that coherence in linguistic expression serves as a crucial pillar for effective branding.

The cultural context cannot be overlooked when discussing language and branding. Language serves as a vehicle for cultural expression, and brands must navigate these cultural landscapes carefully to resonate with diverse consumer bases. According to Moorthy et al. [8], cultural nuances embedded in language significantly affect brand perceptions. This highlights the importance of localization adapting brand messages to align with the linguistic preferences and cultural values of specific markets. Steenkamp et al. [9] note that failing to consider local dialects and idiomatic expressions can lead to misunderstandings and negative brand associations. This underscores the viewpoint that language is not merely a means of communication but also a reflection of cultural identity that brands must navigate thoughtfully.

Language's role in creating emotional resonance is another critical aspect of branding. Numerous studies indicate that emotional language can significantly impact consumer engagement and purchasing behavior. Bagozzi & Dholakia [10] show that emotional appeals in advertising foster stronger connections between consumers and brands. Narratives infused with emotional language not only capture attention but also drive purchasing decisions and foster brand loyalty. Lee & Lull [11] suggest that brands employing conversational language create a more personable and approachable image, which can enhance consumer trust and affinity. This emphasizes the importance of understanding the target audience and tailoring language that resonates on an emotional level.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that language plays a pivotal role in branding, influencing brand identity, consumer perception, and overall brand performance. From establishing emotional connections to navigating cultural nuances, effective language strategies are crucial for successful branding. As marketing practices continue to advance, the synergy between language and branding undoubtedly remains a critical area for further exploration and understanding.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study explores the relationship between language and branding and is guided by semiotic theory and social identity theory. According to Saussure [12], semiotics is the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior. It examines how meaning is constructed and understood in various forms of communication. The theory is rooted in linguistics and has expanded to include visual and cultural aspects. Semiotics is particularly relevant in fields such as marketing, advertising, and branding, where understanding consumer perception is crucial. This quality of the theory fits well in analyzing the interface between language and branding.

According to Saussure [12], a sign is composed of a signifier (the form of the word or image) and a signified (the concept it represents). This distinction helps to understand how brands can create associations through names, logos, and narratives. In branding, words, logos, and slogans function as signs that convey specific meanings to consumers. For example, the color red may signify passion and energy, making it a popular choice for brands wanting to evoke excitement. Kress & Van Leeuwen [13], argue that different semiotic resources can be combined to produce meaning in a way that reflects the social world. In a globalized market, the interpretation of signs can vary drastically across different cultures. This implies that what signifies quality or luxury in one culture may not have the same implications in another society.

As noted by Hall [14], meaning is always produced in social contexts and can never be separated from its context. Therefore, brands must engage in thorough semiotic analyses to ensure their messaging resonates appropriately across diverse cultural landscapes. Mooij [15] states that brands that understand and respect cultural differences can more effectively engage with consumers. Consequently, language is a pivotal factor in navigating complex cultural landscapes in branding. It can be argued that semiotic theory provides a robust framework for understanding how brands can communicate meaning through signs and symbols.

On the other hand, social identity theory is a psychological framework developed by Tajfel and Turner [16] that explains how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, which in turn influences their behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions. The theory proposes that individuals derive a sense of self from the groups to which they belong, and the in-group and out-group distinction impacts social dynamics. Tajfel & Turner [16] report that social identity is that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. It can be argued that once individuals categorize themselves into a group (the in-group), they are likely to favor their group over others.

Turner [17] suggests that the more individuals identify with a group, the more they will act according to the norms of that group. This result shows that indicating strong identification can lead to conformity and loyalty within the group. Social identity theory provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of group behavior and individual self-conception. It emphasizes that our identities are not solely personal but also profoundly shaped by the collective affiliations we maintain. These insights are crucial for understanding social dynamics in diverse contexts such as the interface between language and branding.

4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. Flick [18] opines that qualitative research comprehensively generates rich, nuanced insights into the intricate relationship between language and branding, shedding more light on how brand identities influence consumer perceptions through language. Siame & Banda [19] show that a qualitative approach is particularly suitable for a research of this magnitude as it allows for an in-depth understanding of how language influences brand perception, consumer behavior, and brand identity.

As pointed out by Siame [20], a purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants have relevant experience and insights regarding language and branding. Participants included a diverse sample of 8 consumers aged 18–45 and different marketing professionals who have experience in brand communication and linguistics or language experts to provide insights on language mechanisms and effects. Four (4) participants were females and the other four (4) were males.

Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions of eight (8) participants involving diverse consumers to explore collective perceptions of brand language. Pseudonyms A and B were adopted for the two Focus Groups to observe the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants. The discussions enabled participants to reflect on and challenge each other's views, leading to richer insights. Focus Group Discussions covered topics such as emotional response to language, brand loyalty influenced by language, and the impact of cultural references in branding. The discussion was conducted with marketing professionals and linguists to delve into their perceptions regarding the language used in branding.

Using Mutch's [21] assertion, data collection for this study went hand in hand with data analysis. Content analysis of existing branding materials such as advertisements, social media content, and brand stories was used to evaluate how language is strategically employed in branding. The collected data provided concrete examples or situations regarding the role of language in branding.

Qualitative data were thematically analyzed by identifying common themes and patterns related to the impact of language on branding which is in line with Siame & Banda [22–24]. According to Nowell et al. [25], thematic analysis is among the widely used qualitative analytic methods that emphasize the identification and interpretation of themes within a given qualitative data set. The following emerged as key themes: emotional connection, memorability and appeal, cultural relevance, and authenticity.

Through detailed engagement with participants and careful analysis of branding content, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in branding strategies and consumer linguistics.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings suggest that language is a powerful tool in branding that extends beyond mere communication. Language shapes consumer perceptions and influences brand loyalty. The results regarding the role of language in branding are discussed under four major themes, namely, emotional connection, memorability and appeal, cultural relevance, and authenticity.

5.1. Emotional Connection

One major finding is that brands that employ emotional and relatable language create stronger connections with customers. The verbatim below shows the response from Focus Group Discussion A:

In today's competitive market, the effective use of language on brands differentiates their marketability. The choice of language appeals to the consumer's emotions and makes it a crucial strategy in branding.

The above results show that there is a strong connection between the language used in the brands and consumer emotions. It can be argued that the language of brands must be appealing to consumers to achieve marketability. As noted by McQuarrie and Philips [26], it can also be argued that the effectiveness of branding depends on the emotional and cognitive responses evoked by the language used. This analysis emphasizes the relevance of choosing the right words to foster desired emotional responses. Emotional branding not only enhances loyalty but also makes the brand experience more personal and memorable. When a brand communicates in a way that resonates emotionally, consumers are more likely to recall that brand and develop positive associations that enhance loyalty.

The study also shows that brand names with emotional or descriptive language are more likely to be remembered than those with neutral names. This can be seen in brands like "Sweet Harvest" or "Home Essentials," where emotionally resonant language prompts feelings of warmth, comfort, and reliability. By connecting with consumers on an emotional level, such brand names help establish a deeper psychological bond. Emotional brand names also perform better because they often reflect the values and benefits consumers seek, reinforcing why the brand is memorable and valuable as shown in **Figure 1** below:



Figure 1. *Sweet Harvest* brands.

It can be argued that brand names such as *Sweet Harvest* evoke positive emotions associated with food, leading to higher recall and demand. This finding highlights the power of brand naming as a core component of branding strategy, where language is purposefully crafted to evoke desired responses. This analysis is in tandem with Keller [2], who opines that a brand name, logo, and advertising language can create a strong image in the consumer's mind, leading to favorable associations. It can be argued that the brand name identifies the quality of the product; hence, the brand identity is inherently tied to the language used in branding communications. The above analysis correlates with Rego & Lemos [6], who show that the choice of linguistic elements in branding forms a narrative that communicates what the brand stands for and its core values. It can be argued that effective brand narratives created through careful linguistic choices can evoke emotions and promote relationships between consumers and brands.

5.2. Memorability and Appeal

Memorability and appeal are strongly influenced by the linguistic characteristics of brand names and slogans. Brands that integrate phonetics such as rhyme, alliteration, or rhythm achieve higher levels of recognition recall such as the brand slogan "Boom and the dirt is gone." Consumers are naturally drawn to language that flows easily and has a melodic quality, as these features make the brand name or slogan easier to remember as shown in **Figure 2** below:



Figure 2. Boom and the dirt is gone.

Figure 2 shows that a well-crafted slogan with a rhythmic or rhyming structure such as *Boom and the Dirt is Gone* effectively embeds itself in consumer memory due to its auditory appeal. It can be argued that the way information is framed linguistically plays a role in shaping consumer perceptions, helping brands emphasize the strength of their offerings. Slogans that utilize rhyme or alliteration are significantly higher in appeal than those that do not. Analysis of popular slogans indicates that those featuring rhyme or alliteration score higher in consumer appeal and recall compared to those that do not.

Figure 2 also reveals that the use of language impacts not just recall but also the consumers' attachment to the brand. By presenting a clear catchy, and memorable message, slogans capitalize on the principle of linguistic framing, where the wording encourages positive associations with the brand. The findings align with decision-making theories, such as Turner [17] which suggest that consumers are more likely to recall and favor information that is presented in a pleasing, memorable manner. The analysis agrees with Tversky & Kahneman [27], who demonstrate that people make different decisions based solely on how information is presented. Similarly, advertising using persuasive language can frame products in a way that emphasizes their benefits or mitigates perceived risks. Thus, the linguistic framing in branding not only aids in brand recall but also subtly directs consumer perception toward positive attributes of the product or service. As Kim & Hellier [28] observed, it can be argued that advertisements that utilize positive linguistic strategies lead to more favorable consumer attitudes and intent to purchase the available brands.

5.3. Cultural Relevance

Another prominent finding is the importance of culturally relevant language in branding, especially for brands operating in multiple regions. Adapting language to reflect cultural nuances in a specific market fosters consumer acceptance and engagement. This is particularly crucial in global branding efforts, where consistency must be balanced with localized adaptations to resonate with diverse consumer bases. For instance, the impact of language on branding can be seen in the cultural relevance reflected in Coca-Cola's belief in "social sharing", as illustrated in **Figures 3–5** below:



Figure 3. *Share a Coke* marketing campaign.



Figure 4. *Share a Coke* cultural brand name.

As can be seen in **Figures 3–5**, the study reveals that multilingual brands such as "Coca-Cola" that believe in "sharing" adapt their language to suit the cultural context of a target market and experience an increase in acceptance and engagement. For example, campaigns that feature local languages or culturally relevant imagery demonstrate an understanding of and respect for regional diversity. As supported by De Mooij [29], brands must adapt their language strategies to fit local cultures, as what resonates in one culture may be ineffective or even offensive in another. Therefore, global brands that are successful tailor their messages according to regional linguistic and cultural contexts.

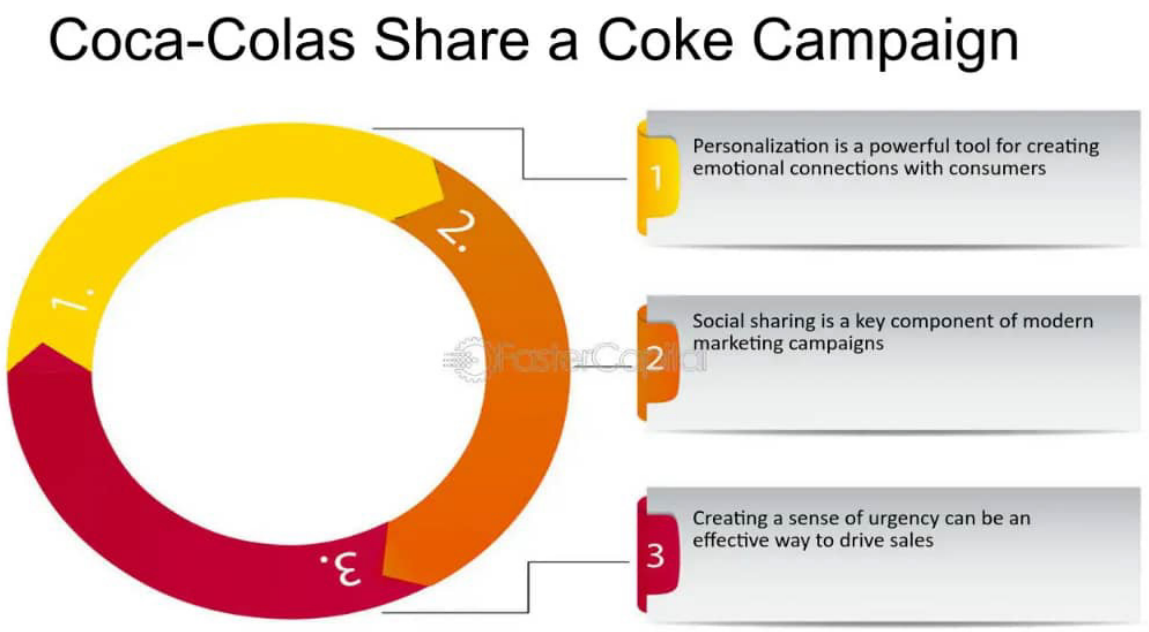


Figure 5. The rationale of the *Share a Coke* campaign.

The study reveals that Coca-Cola's *Share a Coke* campaign believes that brands that incorporate cultural references or local expressions are seen as more relatable and respectful of regional identities. The success of campaigns, as in **Figures 3** and **4**, which featured consumer names from various cultural backgrounds, such as "The Porters", Marcus", "Sonia", "Connor", and "Zach and Nia", illustrates the benefits of the culturally resonant language. This cultural sensitivity not only aids in market acceptance but also enhances the brand's perceived inclusivity, showing a broader societal shift towards valuing diversity and representation. The study shows that brands that communicate in culturally relevant ways are considered to be adaptable, open and genuinely invest in their diverse audiences by reinforcing positive brand perception.

Figure 5 shows that Coca-Cola's *Share a Coke* brand campaign is a language that promotes emotional connection, creates sharing, and generates a sense of urgency to drive sales. The analysis of **Figures 3–5** correlates with Allen et al. [30], who opine that brands that incorporate inclusive language resonate more with marginalized communities and reinforce loyalty and brand trust as reflected in Coca-Cola's "*Share a Coke*" campaign, which featured names in different languages and resonated well with diverse audiences. The above system of branding reflects a broader societal shift toward valuing inclusivity and representation in market efforts. It can be argued that inclusive language has emerged as a powerful tool in branding.

5.4. Authenticity

Authenticity emerged as a significant factor in how consumers perceive and trust brands. Simplified and relatable language, which mirrors the consumer's communication style, fosters a sense of authenticity. Consumers tend to trust brands that appear genuine and transparent, and language choice plays a crucial role in creating this perception. When brand language aligns with the vernacular or linguistic preferences of a target demographic, it resonates more deeply, reinforcing the brand's credibility.

The study reveals that branding fosters marketing communication. Qualitative data from Focus Group Discussion B shows that consumers generally prefer straightforward language, which they feel reflects honesty and transparency. The Focus Group Discussion B concluded that:

> *A brand that uses clear, accessible language in its communications aligns better with consumer expectations for authenticity.*

This approach helps consumers relate to the brand, as they perceive it as more open, approachable, and aligned with their language preferences. By adopting a communication style that is simple and direct, brands can enhance their authenticity, which, in turn, fosters deeper connections with their audience. It can be argued that overly complex language or jargon is often perceived as a barrier, distancing consumers from the brand.

The concept of authenticity of language concerning brands is further illustrated in **Figures 6** and **7** below:



Figure 6. The evolution of the Apple brand logo.



Figure 7. Apple brand.

As can be seen in **Figures 6** and **7**, the "Apple brand name" denotes "simplicity." It can be argued that authenticity not only supports brand loyalty but also promotes a positive image, encouraging consumers to associate the brand with trustworthiness and reliability. The findings underscore the critical role that language plays in successful branding. Language is not just a communication tool; it shapes brand perception, personality, and consumer engagement. Through strategic language use, whether through emotionally resonant names, memorable slogans, culturally attuned messaging, or authentic communication, brands can strengthen their identity, appeal to their target audiences, and influence purchasing decisions.

Therefore, consistency in tone and messaging further reinforces brand recognition and loyalty, enhancing the brand's impact in the marketplace. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that language is a powerful tool that, when used thoughtfully, contributes to creating a lasting brand presence and solid consumer relationships. Brands that understand and leverage the strategic value of language can gain a competitive edge by fostering meaningful and memorable interactions with their customers.

6. Conclusions

The study concludes that the impact of language on branding is profound and multifaceted. It is both an art and a science, requiring thoughtful consideration and strategic execution. By recognizing the integral role that language plays, brands can harness its transformative potential to not only communicate effectively but also inspire, influence, and forge lasting connections with consumers. The brands that master this art will not only thrive in today's competitive environment but will also create legacies that resonate deeply with generations to come.

As explored throughout this article, the words that are chosen to represent brands do not merely serve as descriptions; they are powerful tools that shape perceptions, evoke emotions, and build connections with consumers. A carefully crafted brand language aligns seamlessly with an organization's core values and mission, effectively communicating to customers not just what the brand offers, but who it is at its essence. The rise of globalization has further highlighted the significance of linguistic nuances. Brands that understand this landscape recognize the importance of tailoring their messaging to resonate with diverse cultural contexts. From local dialects to idiomatic expressions, leveraging language that aligns with regional sensibilities can foster deeper relationships and brand loyalty.

Conversely, a failure to acknowledge linguistic subtleties can lead to misunderstandings or even tarnished reputations, underscoring the need for sensitivity and awareness. Moreover, the digital age has ushered in an era where language is more immediate and accessible

than ever. Social media, content marketing, and online interactions provide brands with the opportunity to speak directly to their audiences in real-time. The language of these platforms must be authentic, engaging, and adaptive to the evolving, expectations of consumers. Brands that utilize conversational language, humor, or storytelling are often more relatable and trustworthy, facilitating stronger connections with their audiences. As we move forward in an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of language in branding will only grow. Companies must continue to innovate their linguistic approaches, balancing creativity with clarity to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Integrating inclusive language that reflects diversity and acknowledges the nuances of various identities will not only enhance the brand image but also resonate more deeply with consumers who prioritize values such as representation and authenticity. Ultimately, the relationship between language and branding is a dynamic interplay that reflects broader societal changes. As language evolves, so too must brands. Embracing this evolution means seeing language not as a static element but as a living, breathing facet of brand identity. To stay relevant, brands must engage in ongoing dialogues with their audiences, listening and adapting to the ever-changing linguistic landscape. In a world where noise is abundant, let the right words pave the way for meaningful connections that elevate brand experiences and drive loyalty.

Author Contributions

Two authors wrote the paper. The following were their contributions: N.M. conducted an investigation and collected data, dealt with methodology, and wrote the literature review. P. S. dealt with the conceptualization of the study, validated data collection tools, did formal analysis of the data, writing—original draft preparation, as well as writing—review and editing. Both authors have read and agreed to publish the version of this manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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