

## Linguistic Style in Social Media

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Arguably, the rise of social media has provided many unique opportunities for brands to interact with consumers. While research has examined topics related to consumer-brand relationships on social media (de Vries, Sensler, and Leegflang 2012; Labrecque 2014), the sustained use of social media platforms and their evolving nature merit additional inquiry.

This research examines how the semantic content of a brand's social media communications affects consumer engagement activities (likes, comments, and shares). Our research builds upon previous studies that examines brand post popularity (de Vries, Sensler, and Leegflang 2012) in two important ways. First, we look beyond the message content and investigate how the linguistic style of the message affects a consumer's choice to interact with the brand. In essence, we take into account not only what is being said, but also how it is communicated. Second, we take into account that these interactions are interrelated. That is, each action increases the reach of the message and therefore affects additional actions. Our Multivariate Poisson Regression Analysis allows us to simultaneously compare message characteristics across our three levels of consumer engagement (likes, comments, and shares).

We examine this phenomenon using brand communications on Facebook. Brand posts from Fortune 500 companies were collected over a two week period. A linguistic style profile for each post was created using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) software (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). LIWC has been widely used in psychology and linguistics to identify and important psychological cues for thought processes, emotional states, intentions, and motivations (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). The LIWC dictionary is comprised of nearly 4,500 words and word stems in 80 categories and consists of four main categories (linguistic, psychological, personal concern, and spoken). For the purpose of this research, we focus on linguistic and psychological categories.

We use Multivariate Poisson Regression model to explore the impact of these variables across levels of consumer engagement (likes, comments, shares). Our results show differences across engagement activities for linguistic processes (pronoun usage, word count, word length, and article usage), psychological processes (perceptual and cognitive processes), and message characteristics (vividness and interactivity).

The results of our research offer both managerial and theoretical implications. While previous research has examined how message elements affect likes and comments on Facebook, our research provides additional insights by examining how the linguistic style characteristics of the message, not just the message content, influences consumer engagement. Furthermore, our analysis allows us to simultaneously compare message characteristics across three levels of consumer engagement (likes, comments, and shares). This multivariate analysis is important as these consumer engagement activities are interrelated. Managerially, our research provides important and direct ways in which firms can strategically design their social media messages in order facilitate consumer engagement activities.

### References:

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