



The Effect of Certainty in Language on Customer Brand Power Perception and Mental Engagement on Social Media (Case Study: City Bank Branches in Mashhad)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of certainty in language on brand power perception and mental engagement of City Bank customers in Mashhad on social media. This is an applied research conducted through a descriptive survey. The statistical population included all the customers of City Bank in Mashhad, to a total number of 304,689. The sample size ($n = 384$) was obtained from Cochran's formula, the individual members of which were selected using simple random sampling. For data analysis, partial least squares (PLS) method was used in SPSS and SmartPLS 4. The results indicated that certainty in language had a positive and significant effect on the brand power perception of the City Bank customers on social networks. In addition, according to the results, certainty in language had a positive and significant effect on the mental engagement of City Bank customers on social networks.

KEYWORDS: Certainty in language; Customer brand power perception; Customer mental engagement; Social networks; City Bank

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1. Introduction

Marketing managers spend a lot of money on social media marketing every year. The percentage of marketing budgets devoted to social media is expected to increase from 12% to 20.5% between 2018 and 2023. Because customers spend more time on social media, companies spend a lot of money on social media marketing. Targeting small segments of customers on social media is easier and reaching a large number of customers on social media is less expensive compared to traditional marketing channels such as radio and television, and printed advertising (Moe and Ratchford, 2018). Another advantage of social media platforms is that they have features that make it easy for customers to interact with brands (Pezutti et al, 2021).

Customer engagement in social media refers to interactions between consumers and brands (Lee et al, 2018). Customers can interact with brands on social media in several ways. Firms increasingly interact with customers, as interaction leads to important marketing outcomes, including brand awareness, sales, and profits (Mochon et al, 2018).

Certainty is defined as a state of full confidence or lack of doubt about something (Cambridge, 2020). Therefore, certainty refers to a sense of trust or self-confidence. The specific words that the communication manager uses in a message indicate how its sender feels about sharing his/her belief, opinion, or idea (Han and Lind, 2017). Brands can choose words that convey these concepts when communicating with customers. For example, brands can communicate universally by claiming that a product is suitable for everyone, and use certainty in language by saying that they have absolute confidence in their products.

The growth of social media has completely reshaped the way people interact and communicate. These factors play an important role in facilitating access and greater penetration. Interaction, reach, emotions and growth play a fundamental role in determining social media influencers (Arora et al, 2019). One of the requirements to influence customer understanding of the company is the choice of an appropriate means of communication for promotion of the company's products and services (Zedan Yahia Salem, 2016).

Similar to traditional marketing channels, social media platforms help companies achieve a wide range of marketing outcomes, including increasing brand awareness, influencing brand attitudes, and stimulating word-of-mouth advertising, and sales (Batra & Keller , 2016). However, unlike traditional marketing channels, social media platforms are designed for user interaction and hence offer solutions to stimulate active responses from consumers to brands (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). For example, Facebook and Twitter allow users to respond to messages posted by brands and share their messages with users of other social networks. Although social media is designed to facilitate interactions, engaging consumers on social media remains an ongoing challenge for companies (Pezutti et al, 2021).

The content of brand messages on social media affects customer interaction with brands (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). However, despite the importance of customer engagement with brand content, research has only been conducted to identify the characteristics of brand messages that cause customer engagement (Lee et al, 2018). The scarce research hereon provides little information to managers regarding how to design brand messages for better interaction and better communication with customers. This lack of information is problematic and probably caused managers to doubt their abilities in handling social media for promotion and attainment of their marketing goals (Pezutti et al, 2021).

This research, through this case study, seeks to narrow this gap in the literature by answering the question as to what effect certainty in language has on customer brand power perception and mental engagement in social networks.

2. Theoretical framework and research background

Customer engagement in social media refers to interactions between consumers and brands (Lee et al, 2018). Customers can interact with brands on social media in several ways, for example, they can respond to brands' messages by leaving comments or sharing messages with other members of their network (Pezutti et al, 2021). Certainty in language on social networks is defined as a state of full confidence or lack of doubt about something (Cambridge, 2020). Thus, certainty refers to a sense of trust or self-confidence. The specific words that the communication manager uses in a message indicate how much its sender feels about sharing their belief, opinion, or idea (Han and Lnnd, 2017).

Power increases confidence in one's own beliefs and understanding by increasing people's sensitivity to one's personal experiences and feelings. Creating a power perception by using words that convey certainty on social media may drive customer engagement. Clients use language as signals for inference of their power perception or exert influence over other people (Pezutti et al, 2021).

The concept of Internet social networks in its current form was first proposed in 1960 at the University of Illinois in the US. Communicating with consumers through social media has become increasingly important as companies shift their focus from traditional marketing channels to digital channels (Pezutti et al, 2021).

Ariba Tour et al (2017) found a significant relationship between social network marketing and consumer behavioral intention. Their results also indicated the relative influence of the mediator consumer connection in the relationship between social network marketing and consumer behavioral intention. Seo and Park (2018) noted that brand awareness significantly affects (brand) commitment and brand image significantly affects (brand) commitment and online advertising. Chen and Lin (2019) find that social media marketing activities indirectly affect satisfaction through social identity and perceived value. Yangjuan Hu (2020) noted that in social media marketing, the use of celebrity endorsers is a widespread strategy used for luxury brands. Their results showed that endorsements from local celebrity endorsers (versus standard) lead to more social media engagement. Pezzutti et al (2021) in a research titled "Certainty in language increases consumer interaction on social media," find that messages expressed with clarity and certainty, by influencing the way consumers perceive brands, increase interaction.

Given the above background and drawing on the model of Pezzutti et al (2021), the research conceptual model is as follows.

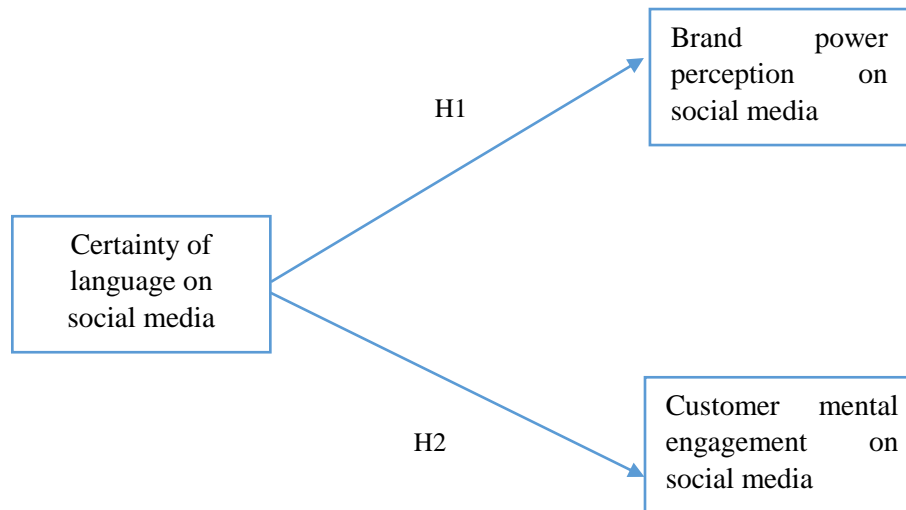


Figure 1. Research conceptual model (Pezzut and Leonhardt, 2021)

Hence, the following hypotheses are made:

The main hypothesis:

H. Certainty in language has a positive and significant effect on brand power perception and mental engagement of City Bank customers on social media.

Sub-hypotheses:

H1. Certainty in language has a positive and significant effect on brand power perception of City Bank customers on social media.

H2. Certainty in language has a positive and significant effect on mental engagement of City Bank customers on social media.

3. Methodology

This is an applied research with a quantitative (comparative) approach conducted through a descriptive survey using a questionnaire. The statistical population included all the actual customers of City Bank in Mashhad to a total number of 304,689. Considering the size of the population, the sample size was (n = 384) was obtained from Cochran's formula the individual members of which were selected using simple random sampling. To measure the variables, the standard questionnaires of Pezzutti et al (2021) were used. The questionnaire was adapted and validated consulting the supervisor and other professors with expertise and knowledge of the field.

A preliminary test of reliability was performed by distributing the questionnaire among 30 respondents, according to which the obtained Cronbach's alpha for all variables of information sharing level and the whole questionnaire was more than 0.7. Next, the obtained data from the whole sample was analyzed in SPSS and the SmartPLS 4 software, using structural equation modeling (SEM) technique for PLS.

4. Findings

In this section, the results of confirmatory factor analysis of each research variable by SmartPLS 4 are presented. The strength of the relationship between the latent and observable variable is given by the factor loading. Factor loading is a value between zero and one. If the factor loading is less than 0.4, the relationship is considered weak and is ignored. A factor loading between 0.4 and 0.6 is acceptable, and if it is greater than 0.6, it is very desirable (Klein, 2010). The factor loadings of the research variables were calculated separately as shown in figure 2.

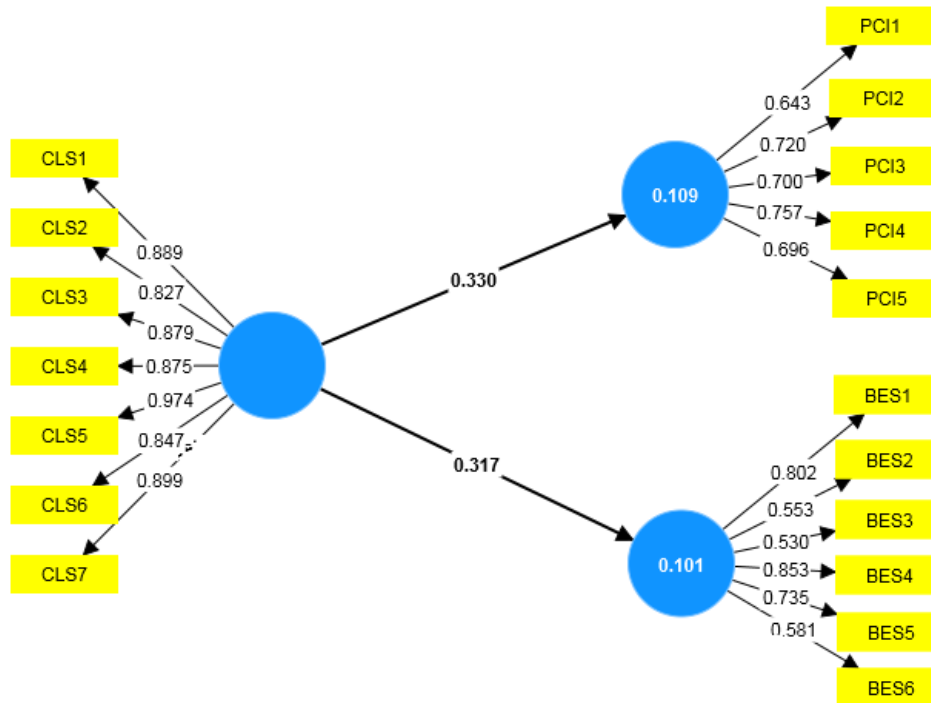


Figure 2. Factor loadings of model components in standard state

As can be seen in the figure above and table 1, in all the model's constructs, factor loadings have values greater than 0.4. Hence, the reliability of measurement models is acceptable. Having measured the factor loadings of the questions, Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability (Dillon–Goldstein's ρ) were computed, the results of which are reported in the table below.

Table 1. The results of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and convergent validity

Dimension	CR	Cronbach's alpha	Convergent validity (AVE)
Brand power perception on social media	0.769	0.760	0.596
Mental engagement	0.825	0.789	0.572
Certainty in language on social media	0.956	0.954	0.954

As is seen in the above table the obtained Cronbach's alpha for all dimensions is greater than the threshold of 0.7, hence the research reliability is confirmed.

To test the composite reliability (CR) of each construct, the Dillon-Goldstein coefficient (ρ) is used. The composite reliability reported in table 1 for each construct is greater than the threshold 0.7, hence composite reliability of the constructs are confirmed.

Another criterion in examining the measurement model fit in terms of internal consistency of the constructs is convergent validity which is measured by average variance extracted (AVE). In the table above, the obtained AVE for all constructs is greater than the minimum acceptable value 0.5, whereby the convergent validity of the model is confirmed.

We also use the measure heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) to assess discriminant validity. If the HTMT value is less than 0.90, there is discriminant validity among the constructs (Henseler et al, 2015).

Table 2. Discriminant validity by HTMT

Variable	Brand power perception on social media	Mental engagement on social media	Certainty in Language on social media
Brand power perception on social media			
Mental engagement on social media	0.537		
Certainty in Language on social media	0.363	0.340	

Overall model fit

Chen (1998) proposed three values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 as criterion values for weak, moderate and strong R^2 values, respectively, as the indicators of the structural model overall fit.

Table 3. R^2 values

Variable	R^2 value	Adjusted R^2 value	Q^2
Brand power perception on social media	0.109	0.107	0.196
	0.102	0.98	0.187

The second structural model fit index is the Q^2 index. This measure indicates the predictive power of the model regarding an endogenous construct. As a rule, Q^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 indicate weak, moderate and strong predictive power corresponding to an exogenous construct, respectively. Given the R^2 and Q^2 values, as reported in table 3, the structural model overall fit and predicting power is confirmed.

According to Henseler et al (2014), a standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) value of below 0.1, and in a conservative case, of 0.08, indicates the model adequate overall fit.

Table 4. The results on the overall model fit using standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and NFI indec

Latent variables	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.078	0.073
NFI	0.562	0.562
d_ULS	3.851	3.851
d_G	1.769	1.769

The NFI index, which is called the Bentler-Bonnet index, is a comparative fit index. This index assesses the model by comparing the chi-square values of the independent model and the chi-square of the saturated model. An NFI value above 0.9 is acceptable, indicating the model suitability. Bootstrap provides confidence intervals for the two values discrepancy. Values greater than 0.05 for d_ULS measure (i.e. the Euclidean least square discrepancy) and d_G (i.e. the geodesic discrepancy) indicate good model fit. The obtained d_ULS and d_G values in the above table which are more than 0.05 indicate the model good fit.

By default, PLS4 software tests relationships at the 95% confidence level, and since the t-value at this interval is equal to 1.96, any relationship with a t-value outside the range of -1.96 to +1.96 is considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

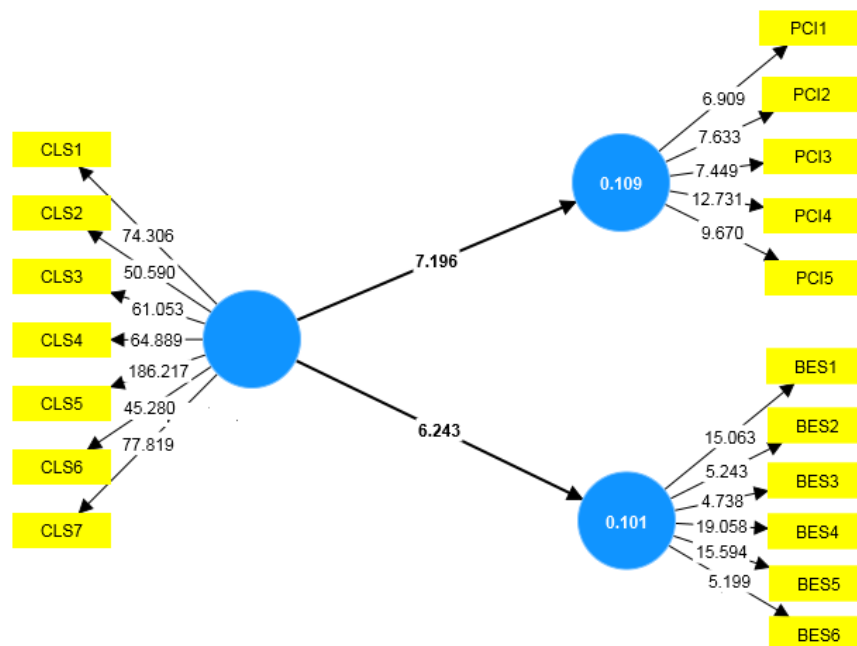


Figure 3. Significance coefficients of the conceptual model

The t-statistic shows the significance of the relationship between the variables. A t-value greater than 1.96 indicates a positive and significant effect; a t-value between -1.96 and +1.96 indicates the lack a significant effect; and a t-value smaller than -1.96 indicates a negative and significant effect. Also, if the

path coefficients are above 0.6, it means that there is a strong relationship between the two variables; If it is between 0.3 and 0.6, there is a moderate relationship, and if it is below 0.4, there is a weak relationship. As shown in the model, all the hypotheses of the model are confirmed as their t-value falls outside the specified range, indicating the significance of all hypotheses and relationships between variables at the 95% confidence interval. The results on the test of the research hypotheses are presented in the table below.

Table 5. Results on the test of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	p-value	t-value	Test result
1st hypothesis	Certainty in language \Rightarrow Brand power perception (on social media)	0.330	7.196	0.000	Accepted
2nd hypothesis	Certainty in language \Rightarrow Mental engagement (on social media)	0.317	6.243	0.000	Accepted

Given the results in the above table, all the research hypotheses are confirmed.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The result on the test of the first sub-hypothesis indicates that certainty in language has a positive and significant effect on the brand power perception of City Bank customers on social networks. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Chen and Lin (2019), Seo and Park (2018), Ariba Tour et al (2017). This suggests that the bank managers need to focus on customers' mind for creating certainty in language and its benefits and make the advantages thereof clear and tangible to the customers which would enhance the company's brand power perception among the customers.

In addition, by developing the bank's brand power, the programs that banks design for their customers are better implemented, and the customer mental engagement with the brand is also positively affected through this process. In brand social networks where there is brand power, customers feel more secure and offer ideas for the brand promotion and success.

The results on the test of the second sub-hypothesis confirm the effect of certainty in language on mental engagement of City Bank customers on social networks. This finding implies that bank managers and marketers can develop relationships between customers and brands within the framework of social networks by creating certainty in language as a successful marketing tool. This finding is consistent with the results found by Seo and Park (2018), Ariba Tour et al (2017), Haron et al (2016), and Chen and Lin (2019). It can also be said that the rapid development of social networks has gradually changed the consumption habits of consumers and has led to a significant growth of the market on social media. And certainty in language on social networks makes the organization's output improve, and this means increased brand power and enhanced customer mental engagement. This would improve profitability, increase customer collaboration in product development and recommendation of more brands to friends and acquaintances by customers on social networks.

Finally, managers are advised to more invest in social media marketing training and promotion for better conduction of the social media marketing process, given its effect on the bank development and progress. The banks manager can provide the grounds in a way that social media be a good environment for customers and their close communication, and encourage new ideas, innovation, quality improvement which would lead to effective marketing planning and practices.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Authenticity of the texts, honesty and fidelity has been observed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.