

Don't Say The "S" Word.
The Impact of Buzzwords on Brand Trust.
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Abstract

Purpose: To investigate the impact of buzzwords on consumers' perceptions of marketing messages and their impact on brand trust.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper adopts a qualitative and quantitative research method. The information about buzzwords, linguistics, brand trust and brand image has been sourced through a secondary data literary review. In addition, primary data about how buzzwords are perceived and how they interact with brand image and trust.

Findings: The paper's findings show that buzzwords impact overall brand trust. In addition, the paper's findings show that there are perceptual synergies between buzzwords brand trust and brand image that all culminate into affecting brand loyalty.

Originality/value: There is no literature or research on the impact buzzwords have on brand trust and image and vice versa and how brand trust can be transferred onto a word's meaning. These synergies are essential knowledge for brand managers to devise strategic communications effectively. This paper aims to fill the research gap and provide new insight into using buzzwords and brand trust.

Keywords: Buzzword, sustainability, linguistics, brand image, brand trust, relationship management, brand loyalty.

Paper type: Research paper.

Introduction

In a world awash with marketing messages, where every click, scroll, and swipe exposes consumers to a barrage of brand communications, marketers, more than ever before, must carefully craft their messages in order to pierce through the noise. In the labyrinthine landscape of contemporary marketing, buzzwords have emerged as marketer's navigational stars, guiding consumers through the vast universe of products and services. These potent linguistic tools wield the power to captivate, intrigue, and inspire trust, all with a mere utterance. Yet, in the field of marketing, where language is both sword and shield, buzzword's impact has little to no literature.

Aim and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature and identify valuable insights for marketers and strategic managers. This paper investigates the impact of buzzwords on consumers' perceptions of marketing messages and their impact on brand trust. This research aims to answer two fundamental questions: Does using buzzwords influence brand trust?

This study seeks to determine whether including buzzwords in marketing messages has a discernible effect on how consumers perceive and interpret those messages. It delves into whether certain buzzwords evoke specific reactions among consumers, such as heightened interest, scepticism, or trust. Secondly, we aim to answer the question: How do buzzwords shape consumer perception and, therefore, brand trust?

Beyond establishing a correlation between buzzwords and consumer perception, this research aims to explore the mechanisms by which buzzwords shape consumer attitudes and deep dive into assessing how the choice of buzzwords impacts the credibility,

persuasiveness, and overall effectiveness of marketing messages.

The formulation of this aim is firmly rooted in the problem discussion, which recognizes the prevalence of buzzwords in contemporary marketing and the need to evaluate their impact critically. To ensure that this research remains focused and manageable, the paper's aim is intentionally delimited, targeting a specific aspect of marketing communication—buzzword usage—and its perceptual consequences on brand trust.

Throughout this study, we will employ rigorous research methodologies, including primary data collection, analysis, and interpretation, to provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between buzzwords and brand trust. By the end of this research, we aspire to contribute substantially to the academic and managerial understanding of how buzzwords function within marketing discourse and the implications for consumer behaviour and decision-making for brand managers.

Literature Review

Buzzwords

Buzzwords are an increasingly important topic, both in the business world and in everyday life (Robert Cluley, 2013). According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), buzzwords are "...words or expressions from a particular subject area that have become fashionable by being used extensively, especially on television and in newspapers".

The origin of buzzwords can be traced to Hallgren and Weiss (1946), two Harvard University students. They invented the term *buzz words* to understand better a distinct language type they used to ease their studies. Buzzwords were applied for

framing and finding the critical answer to different questions, situations or cases (Cluley, 2013). Consequently, business students used the buzzwords to speak with their professors with authority properly. Through time, buzzwords found their way into the business world. Nowadays, they are used in corporate environments and are known as marketing techniques. Marketing terminology frequently evolves in tandem with the field's development. Staying current with the most recent buzzwords can be a valuable contribution to effectively communicating with other stakeholders (Indeed, 2022).

Buzzwords are a part of so-called business jargon, and their list is extensive. This is due to many reasons. Sometimes buzzwords work as a shorthand; sometimes, they are used as a test to see if a person is eligible to be in the corporate world and at other times, it is because the words are simply picturesque (Kirby & Coutu, 2001). Buzzwords can benefit a company (Ettore, 1997), making workplace communication easier. Employees familiar with common corporate buzzwords can engage with coworkers and customers on a different, more personal level. Moreover, buzzwords used in a work environment can increase employee engagement (Herrity, 2023).

Despite this and the buzz around the buzzwords, some companies try to avoid them as they may be seen as unnecessary and overused (O'Rourke, 2017). According to O'Rourke, the problem is that buzzwords today do not accomplish the sole core purpose of being able to communicate to the audience clearly. As a result, buzzwords prioritise presentation and appearance rather than the actual content, potentially concealing the absence of concrete ideas beneath the message.

Buzzword Lifecycle

Expressions become buzzwords because they describe something in a new way. E.g. before 2020, "new normal" was just a

phrase that transitioned into a buzzword, but in 2021, people had already become annoyed with it (Nolt's, 2021). Over time, buzzwords lose their freshness and become unwelcome. According to Malyuga and Rimmer (2021), this refers to a buzzword's life cycle, which is based on the durability of a buzzword from conception to decay. The stages are "...as in the birth of a buzzword, half-life of a buzzword, an old buzzword is back, a buzzword in the making, no longer a buzzword, buzzword mutation" (Malyuga & Rimmer, 2021). Consequently, buzzwords can benefit a brand at the beginning of the lifecycle, but as they become over- and misused, they can harm it.

Buzzwords & Brands

Buzzwords have become a noteworthy aspect of contemporary language in the branding world. The literature suggests that using buzzwords can have both a damaging and beneficial impact on a brand.

They can make a brand gain attention by using catchy and trendy expressions while attracting new customers and making complex ideas easier to understand. Furthermore, buzzwords can help optimise search engines, increasing a company's website ranking and visibility (Karr, 2023). Buzzwords also act as intermediaries to complex words, making them more understandable to ease business communication towards customers (Cornwall, 2010). Additionally, using strategic buzzwords may help shape brand identity and bring the brand closer in the eyes of consumers (Karr, 2023).

Buzzwords can also negatively affect a brand when overused and poorly explained, and brands do not deliver on their promise. In that case, consumers might see the communication strategy as empty marketing. Buzzwords are also dependent on timing and trends. If a company builds its brand around a buzzword and the word becomes outdated, the entire brand strategy

can lose relevance. Additionally, they do not leave enough room for differentiation, making it harder for a brand to stand out and gain a competitive advantage (Karr, 2023).

Hence, companies should be aware of buzzwords and the consequences they may have when implemented. They might help a company's brand strategy but also damage it.

Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study and analysis of a language's form, meaning and context (André, 1960). The practice dates back to Mesopotamia, where scribes created glossaries documenting the definition and pronunciation of terms in several languages (Halloran, 2018). Since then, the concept has broadened and now incorporates several interdisciplinary fields and theoretical frameworks. This section will focus on applied linguistics, meaning the investigation of language in relation to real-world phenomena. In this case, however, emphasis will be put on words' impact on the human mind.

Linguistic relativity, or The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, is a concept which proposes that the structure of languages influences the way individuals perceive their world (Sapir, 1929). This is relevant when looking at the mental mechanisms behind words' effect on decision-making and behaviours. According to Pogacar et al. (2022), various psychological processes dictate a person's actions, and two are essential in this context: *The cognitive processes* that take place within a person's mind and *the social processes* that regard interpersonal communication. It is important to note that these categories do not function in seclusion but in synergy.

The Cognitive Process

According to semiotics studies, a word's function is to convey meaning. There are three ways an expression may do this: by directly referring to something tangible or

intangible, by distinguishing itself from other expressions while making sense in relation to those, and by either having a literal or a connotational meaning, carrying a broader cultural and emotional association (Olmen & Athanasopoulos, 2018). Expressions that convey more meaning are more memorable. A word that is intuitively linked to a symbolic representation is more accessible to recognise and recall (Pogacar et al., 2018). Therefore, the choice of words when communicating may have an autonomous impact on the audience while indicating a communicator's intentions (Berger & Packard, 2022). A word has a symbolic function in association, wherein a linguistic expression triggers that mental picture (Chandra, 2021). This process can either be unconscious or conscious, depending on the complexity of the word. When a word is more complicated to interpret, the cognitive effort required is higher and takes longer to process. It is the linguistic factors attached to a word that makes it more difficult to decipher; a metaphor is harder to process than a number. However, these factors may also shape the connotations of a word in the mind of the receiver (Pogacar et al., 2018).

Furthermore, when interpreting a word, a cognitive and emotional assessment co-occur in synergy. *The cognitive assessment* is tasked with receiving and processing stimuli. In contrast, the *emotional assessment* adds feelings to the cognitive functions based on the individual's cultural environment, psychological habits and social norms (Yanling & Siyu, 2022). Hence, the understanding and response a human being has to a word does not solely come from within but is closely linked to the societal context of that person's existence.

The Social Processes

According to Sarwat (2019), sociolinguists "... explore the social function of the language and the way it is used to convey the meaning". It refers to why counterparts

communicate differently depending on the social situation. This communicational approach is altered by who the speaker is and that person's societal role, which stylistics or tonal style are used, e.g. formal or informal; who the listener is and that person's role in society; and in what setting the interaction takes place.

In addition, the field of pragmatics points out the speaker's intention with a message, what it conveys – a promise or request e.g. -- and how it is trying to affect the receiver (Ingber et al., 1982). Furthermore, if something else is implied within that explicit message and if the conveyed message is relevant enough for the interpreter to put effort into understanding it. Therefore, the well-being of a relationship between two parts adds a level of influence when interpreting a message (Mey, 2006).

These conditions are also related to the expectations the receiver has of the communicator. Suppose the message is in accordance with the receiver's preconceived notions of the sender. In that case, it becomes a kind of conformity where a promise is kept, which leads to a better liking of the communicator (Pogacar et al., 2022). Thus, the significance lies not only in the content of the message but also in its manner of expression and interrelationships.

Brand Trust

According to Zarouali, trust is "...the result of a trustor's evaluation of how likely the trustee will behave according to the trustor's expectations." (2021). Trust has been discussed across various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, economics, and communication science. In marketing, trust refers to a psychological state where the consumer has confidence in the brand's ability to deliver on its promise and function concerning the consumer's interest and welfare. (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). As underlined by Alhaddad

(2015), in addition to brand loyalty and brand image, brand trust is the most essential marketing concept of the past decade.

Brand managers use brand image and trust to build a solid brand reputation and, subsequently, brand loyalty. Brand image, "the combination of the consumer's perceptions and beliefs about a brand" (Alhaddad, 2015), has long been coined as a central marketing concept for brand building by academic leaders such as Keller (1998). Several studies support the claim of a positive relationship between consumer trust and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Mayer et al., 1995). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), the relationship that trust creates is highly valued, leading to brand loyalty. This was later confirmed by Alhaddad's research in 2015, which also concluded that brand trust had a more substantial effect on brand loyalty than brand image.

Brand trust is a consumer's perception shaped by first-person experiences and brand communications (Northwestern, 2022). Resources like the Edelman Trust Barometer rate trust based on several metrics, including functional, moral, ethical, societal, environmental, transactional, personal, and cultural trust. Doney and Cannon (1997) suggest that reliability, safety, and honesty are all essential features of trust that consumers incorporate in their trust-building journey.

The Commitment-Trust Theory by Morgan and Hunt (1994) broke trust down into several dimensions: competence trust, the confidence in the other party's abilities; goodwill trust, confidence in the other party's intentions; and reliability trust, confidence in the other party's consistency and dependability. Altogether, brand trust is multidimensional.

Brand Trust Dynamics

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán's studies (2001) have shown that brand trust is connected to other variables directly associated with the brand, such as consumption satisfaction. Therefore, synergies between brand trust and other brand elements affect one another.

A study by Liu et al. (2018) found that brand trust could also affect and be affected by variables indirectly linked to the brand. Brand trust can be transferred to other brands from one consumer to another or from a marketer to another. It can be established that brand trust affects and is affected by an ecosystem of intrinsic and extrinsic variables to the brand. However, to the best of our knowledge, literature has yet to explore if and how buzzwords and dialects interacted with brand trust and their impact on one another.

Managerial Relevance

In the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report (Edelman Trust Institute, 2023), disregarding gender, income, and age, 70% of respondents said that trusting a brand is more critical today than ever. 53% of the respondents said that the second most crucial factor when purchasing a new brand is "whether you trust the company that owns the brand or makes the product" (Northwestern, 2022). Qualtrics research (2021) found that 65% of consumers have switched loyalty because the customer experience did not match what the brand's image promised. Brand trust is a firm measure customers use to judge whether they should buy a brand.

Brand trust is fundamental to developing loyalty (Reicheld & Schefter, 2000) and a powerful relationship marketing tool for brands (Berry, 1993). In growing competitive markets with high degrees of uncertainty and low product differentiation, incorporating brand trust and relationship marketing can generate brand loyalty. Thus, increasing sales and developing a consumer base less sensitive to competitors'

marketing efforts (Delgado-Ballester, 2001).

In summary, brand trust is a complex and multifaceted concept. Building and maintaining trust involves a combination of these elements, each of which contributes to a brand's credibility and reliability in the eyes of consumers, leading to brand loyalty.

Methodology

This section clarifies how an empirical investigation was conducted and the reasoning behind it. Its central aim was to understand and identify insights into how buzzwords affect brand trust. Outlined below are the chosen methods and their justifications. It highlights the specifics regarding the research approach, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and the strategies employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The results establish a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis and discussion.

Research Approach

The research approach intended to gather a mix of quantitative and qualitative input from primary sources since this would complement the secondary sources. The survey was designed based on the literary review to concretise theoretical frameworks by adapting them to understandable questions and putting them in a more realistic context. In addition, the examination was descriptive. Combining these research methods enabled an in-depth analysis, contributing to relevant managerial implications.

Data Collection Method

The data was collected through an online survey since this sampling method is simple and effective in capturing as many respondents as possible. Using Google Forms, the survey was sent out across social media and chat forums with the goal of amassing 100 responses. The aim was to collect data from various demographics to

accurately depict sentiment across a broad range of consumers likely to be affected by buzzwords and to acquire a dataset representative of the population.

Survey Design

To avoid confusion and obtain precise results, the survey focused on testing the impact of one selected buzzword on brand trust. The word chosen for this was “sustainability” since it is one of the most used buzzwords in today’s environment and relevant to consumers and brand managers.

The survey design was based on previous secondary sources. Firstly, in linguistics, a word may have several meanings for a person depending on several internal factors and the environmental context. *Fig.1* is a graphical representation of the different functions that influence the meaning of a word. The core ‘A’ represents the literal meaning of a word, as defined in the dictionary. The second layer, ‘B’, encompasses connotational meaning, i.e., if the expression has any associations except the literal one. ‘C’ symbolises the word’s meaning in a social context. A word does not usually operate alone and is affected by the context in which it is found (Pogacar, 2018).

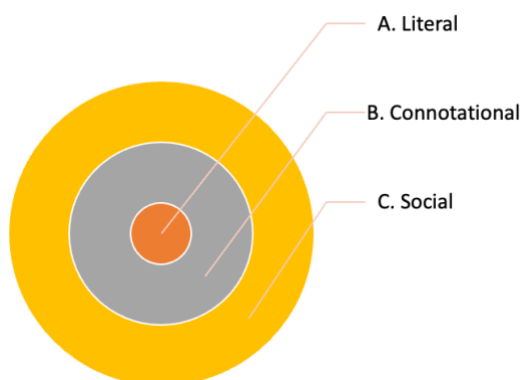


Figure 1: Layers of Meaning Around a Word

With this in mind, the survey was divided into three parts where different layers were examined in relation to brand trust; part 1

investigated layers A and B; part 2, layers B and C; and part 3 tested how layer C affects layer B. This structure as a whole, measured the buzzword’s total impact on brand trust within a set context.

Secondly, all the answers to the quantitative questions consisted of a scale from 1-5 and were based on four key dimensions of brand trust: authenticity, ethicality, quality, and trustworthiness. These variables were extracted from our secondary data analysis. Doing so allowed for the buzzword to be directly linked to its effect on brand trust.

The first part of the study was designed to test the impact of a buzzword in seclusion, i.e. testing layers A and B. This was initially done by an open question regarding what connotations the word “sustainability” evoked within. The buzzword was then put in a fake advert without any apparent branding and compared to the same advertisement but using another term, “environmentally friendly” instead of sustainability. The reasoning is to test the buzzword’s implications on its own in comparison with a similar word not categorised as a buzzword.

The second part of the study tested the impact of a buzzword when put in the context of a brand, testing layers B and C. The brand chosen for this purpose was Louis Vuitton, to ensure that respondents knew the brand, but also since a well-known luxury brand is not associated with sustainability to a high degree. Quantitative questions were asked after presenting the brand on its own and then presenting it in a framed setting with the word sustainability -- directly sourced from Louis Vuitton’s website. This indicated if the brand trust had changed when adding the buzzword to the context.

The survey’s last part was structured using the same advert template as in section one. The only difference was that the Louis Vuitton logo was visible. The quantitative

questions in this place were the same as when first presenting the advert with “sustainability” and then changing the word to “environmentally friendly”. The purpose was to see how layer C influences layer B or how personal and social preferences influence the impact of a buzzword.

Ethical Considerations, Validity and Reliability

Regarding ethical considerations, respondents were informed that their personal data was anonymous and protected to ensure confidentiality and that the survey results would be used in an academic paper. To confirm this transparently, all the documented data is presented in the sections below, along with the survey in the appendix.

Moreover, the adopted methodology ensured the validity and reliability of the collected data. The construct of the questions and deployed measurement tools are both relevant and comprehensive concerning the variables of buzzwords and brand trust.

Empirical Results

The following section presents the study’s empirical results, comprising Table 1 and Table 2. These tables provide a comprehensive overview of the data and findings obtained during the analysis.

Table 1 provides an in-depth examination of various categories and factors. These categories encompass measures related to trust, authenticity, ethicality, high quality, and trustworthiness. Each factor within these categories is rated on a scale ranging from “Not at all (1)” to “Absolutely (5).” The “Score” column offers the calculated average score for each factor within its corresponding category. *Table 2* offers a comprehensive exploration of underlying variables (LV) in our study, with a focus on

factors rated on a scale from “Not at all (1)” to “Absolutely (5).” These factors are grouped within three distinct latent variable categories: “Trust,” “LV - Neutral/Association,” and “LV - Sustainability Framed/Association.”

Results

The results are based on a survey conducted with a total of 50 respondents, comprising 34 females and 16 males. 90% of the participants were between the ages of 20-29, while the remaining percentage was 30-59.

Trust Score

The table below outlines how the survey participants perceived sustainability on its own in contrast to when put in a context with Louis Vuitton and the term “environmentally friendly” by itself with the same brand context. The higher the trust score, the greater the perceived trust is for the category.

Additionally, when directly asked, 58% trusted the *supplementary word* with Louis Vuitton, while 42% regarded sustainability in this context as more trustworthy.

The table 2 showcases the difference in perceived trust of Louis Vuitton when the brand is presented on its own compared to when it is framed with the term sustainability. The higher the trust score, the greater the perceived trust is for the category.

Table 1

Category	Factors	Not at all (1)	A little (2)	Somewhat (3)	Quite (4)	Absolutely (5)	Score	Trust Score
Buzzword Alone	Authenticity	16	14	8	8	4	2,4	12,02
	Ethicality	1	12	5	18	14	3,64	
	High-quality	7	13	10	16	4	2,94	
	Trust-Worthiness	6	13	12	11	8	3,04	
Supplementary word	Authenticity	6	13	8	13	10	3,16	13,45
	Ethicality	2	3	16	13	16	3,75	
	High-quality	6	7	19	11	7	3,12	
	Trust-Worthiness	3	9	11	18	9	3,42	
Buzzword with Brand	Authenticity	0	20	17	9	4	2,94	10,42
	Ethicality	12	19	9	9	1	2,36	
	High-quality	6	12	14	14	4	2,96	
	Trust-Worthiness	16	17	11	5	1	2,16	
Supplementary word with Brand	Authenticity	14	17	10	8	1	2,30	9,8
	Ethicality	8	20	13	7	2	2,50	
	High-quality	6	11	16	12	5	2,38	
	Trust-Worthiness	8	16	16	7	3	2,62	

Table 2

LV	Factors	Not at all (1)	A little (2)	Somewhat (3)	Quite (4)	Absolutely (5)	Score	Trust Score
LV - Neutral / Association	Transparency & Authenticity	5	14	16	13	2	2,86	9,34
	Socially Responsible & Ethical	7	19	20	4	0	2,42	
	Product Quality	0	2	9	23	16	4,06	
LV - Sustainability Framed / Association	Transparency & Authenticity	7	10	16	15	2	2,90	9,76
	Socially Responsible & Ethical	6	11	15	16	2	2,94	
	Product Quality	1	1	11	25	12	3,92	

Perceptions of the Word Sustainability

In an open-ended question, the participants were asked to write three things about how they perceived sustainability. The answers consist of 44 different associations, which can be grouped into four different categories:

- *Environmental Concerns* - regarded words such as nature, environment, eco-friendly and climate. 40 % ended up in this group.
- *Business and Corporate Responsibility* - accounted for about 16%, including words such as corporations, CSR, social equity and global.
- *Long-term and Sustainable Goals* - amounted to 16 % and included words like development, responsibility, growth and long-term strategy.
- *Critiques and Challenges* - 28% of the associations regarded words such as fake, bad quality, overused, greenwashed and buzzword.

Influence of Buzzwords

Regarding whether participants thought buzzwords influence their purchasing decision, 68% answered that it did, 18% answered no and 6% said they had no opinion. The remaining 8% answered that it might affect them a bit; they would like to think it did not; they did not know the definition of a buzzword.

Analysis

A Buzzword's Meanings

The different segments conducted from people's associations regarding sustainability intrinsically imply that the word itself refers to something intangible, carrying a broader connotational meaning and that the interpretation may differ depending on the receiver (Daniel et al., 2018). Furthermore, it shows that a buzzword is a complex expression which demands more from a person cognitively to understand it (Pogacar et al., 2018). This makes the human mind rationalise rather than intuitively feel what conclusion it should make out of this (Kahneman, 2011).

While most perceptions are linked to aspects like environment, CSR and long-term actions, 28% regarded sustainability as negative. Proving that a buzzword does not clearly communicate a primary message to an audience (O'Rourke, 2017). Primarily since the rationalisation required to interpret the word, which in turn is heavily influenced by a person's societal context and personal experience (Yanling & Siyu, 2022).

Table 1 demonstrates this notion since sustainability was regarded as less trustworthy than environmentally friendly, which is more of a neutral word. This difference is mainly affected by sustainability being regarded as less authentic and trustworthy. This is presumably because of the expression's long lifecycle along with the over- and misuse of the word (O'Rourke, 2017)

Brands should, therefore, evaluate the usage of buzzwords in their communication strategy. Especially since 68% think that buzzwords affect their purchasing decisions. Thus, using a complex word with a negative connotation can reflect poorly on the brand.

Buzzword's Impact on Brand Trust

“Table 2” shows data regarding participants' perceptions of the luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton (LV) in the context of sustainability, comparing how trust and related factors change when the brand is framed with the term “sustainability”. When we introduce the term ‘sustainability’ into LV's brand identity, it appears to positively impact overall trust scores, as evidenced by the increase in trust scores.

In this survey, our respondents (receivers) perceived the sender's message to be in accordance with the sender's identity and were thus accepted by the receivers (Pogacar et al., 2022). Consequently, the

term sustainability was seen as a move in the right direction for LV.

Moreover, who the speaker is plays a vital role in how the message is perceived (Sarwat, 2019). In the case of LV and sustainability, LV is the speaker, and sustainability is the message. As LV's brand perception is relatively high, the sustainability perception is met with successful feedback from the customers.

Our findings suggest that adding ‘sustainability’ to a well-known brand like LV can enhance the overall perception of trust, particularly in terms of *Transparency and Authenticity* and *Social Responsibility and Ethical*. This aligns with the Commitment-Trust Theory, where trust and commitment are interrelated, creating a positive feedback loop (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Higher trust levels lead to increased commitment, and higher commitment levels, in turn, reinforce trust.

However, it is essential to note that this positive shift in trust scores is not uniform across all dimensions. While trust and related factors improve, we observe a decrease in the perception of LV's *Product Quality*. This implies that introducing the buzzword ‘sustainability’ into the marketing strategy may increase the overall trust score but may affect how consumers perceive *Product Quality*.

Impact of Brand Trust on Buzzwords

Louis Vuitton is a well-known brand with a solid reputation. However, we saw that it was not necessarily perceived as authentic nor socially responsible but incredibly established as a trusted provider of quality with a 4,06 average rating on product quality. Louis Vuitton is trusted for its competence, not its benevolence (Li et al., 2008).

The last part of the survey analysed brands' role in consumers' perception of buzzwords and how the two interacted. Indeed, while

Part 1 of the survey tested the impact of buzzwords in a vacuum, understanding the effect of buzzwords within the context of pre-existing brand perceptions and trust is crucial for our study to become relevant managerially.

As Table 2 shows, the overall trust score for a brand with a buzzword was higher (10,42) than that of the brand with the supplementary word (9.8). It is crucial to note that both trust scores were significantly lower than their scores without a brand (12,02 and 13,45, respectively).

Two observations can be made from these facts: the overall trust score drops when associated with a brand no matter the nature of the word, and while the buzzword had a lower score without a brand compared to its supplement, it had a higher one when associated with a brand. On the other hand, the perceived quality of the brand's products significantly decreased when implementing both the buzzword (2,96) and supplementary word (2,38). The association of the concept of sustainability has effectively driven down the perceived brand promise of Louis Vuitton, delivering high-quality products.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this. As Liu et al. (2018) understand, trust can be transferred from consumers to other stakeholders. We have found here that the consumer's trust in a brand could also be transferred to the perception of messaging. The context, brand image and framing of the brand affect how the consumer receives messages and words. Louis Vuitton is a famous brand, so we can infer that popular words, such as buzzwords, would become a trusted fit with the existing brand image. Pogacar et al. (2022) explored the relationship between sender and receiver and how it affected perception; here, we have gone a step further and explored how the sender and receiver would affect the message. Lastly, while the brand positively affects the

buzzword's impact, the buzzword is detrimental to the perception of a brand's competence. There are perceptual synergical exchanges between the two variables that, in our case, have yielded a positive result for the brand.

Framework

These findings show that the understanding and trustworthiness of a buzzword like "sustainability" are highly contingent on individual experiences and contextual factors. Buzzwords are complex words and do not communicate a unique and universal meaning to an audience since understanding a buzzword's sense may differ depending on the receiver's personal experiences and social context.

Nevertheless, adding 'sustainability' to a well-known brand like Louis Vuitton can enhance the overall trust for the company, showing that a buzzword may directly impact brand perception and associations. This is because higher trust levels lead to increased commitment, and higher commitment levels, in turn, reinforce trust. In contrast, this also proves a brand's ability to shape the meaning of a buzzword in either a positive or negative manner.

Additionally, the interpretation of a buzzword is influenced by the relationship between the sender and receiver of the message and the receiver's expectations of the sender. Furthermore, the association of a buzzword with a brand, irrespective of its nature, generally diminishes trust, with both buzzwords and supplementary words being more trusted in isolation. This phenomenon is primarily attributed to the brand's capacity to shape the meaning of the buzzword, either positively or negatively, emphasising the delicate balance between utilising buzzwords effectively and avoiding potential detriment to a brand's overall competence and consumer perception.

However, even if the overall brand trust is increased by putting sustainability in the same context as Louis Vuitton, it also hurts the brand's perceived product quality. Hence, knowing how a buzzword may affect trust and overall perception of a brand is crucial since it shapes the brand image. To communicate their brand identity as impactful as possible, brand managers must know the relationship between buzzwords, brand trust and brand associations.

In essence, this emphasises the awareness a brand manager must have when designing their brand strategy. Words influence a brand's trust and how people perceive the brand overall. At the same time, brand image and trust also influence the perception and received meaning of the word.

Brand Trust Synergies Model

The framework below outlines the overarching relationship between buzzwords, brand trust and brand image when put in the same context. As can be observed below, these categories work in synergies, influencing the perception of one another. The meaning of a buzzword affects the overall trust and the brand image while simultaneously being altered by the brand's image and level of trust. In contrast, the brand image impacts the essence of a buzzword and level of trust, while at the same time being influenced by them. At the core, brand trust dictates the perception of both a buzzword as well as the brand image.

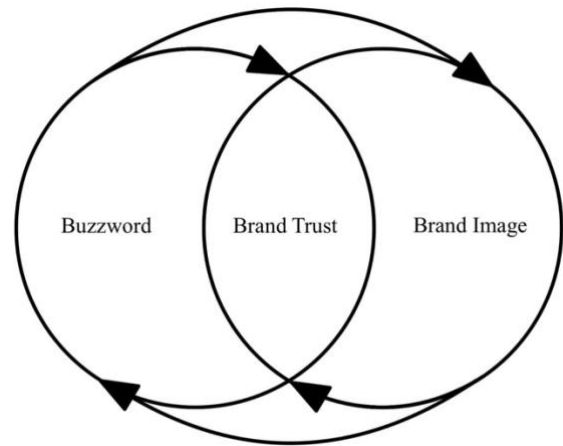


Figure 2 - Brand Trust Synergy Model

Brand Trust Synergies In-Depth Model

A further in-depth look at this interrelated system highlights the specific factors determining the role of a buzzword and brand image, ultimately affecting brand trust and vice versa. The perception of brand image is influenced by a buzzword's level of complexity as well as its literal and connotational meaning. In turn, the understanding of a buzzword is changed by a brand's identity, reputation and activities which shape the brand image. Thus, all these elements that shape a buzzword and brand image within a specific context simultaneously help determine the perceived brand trust at length. Moreover, brand trust directly impacts the configuration of a buzzword and brand image, along with all their minor parts. Altering one component affects the whole chain.

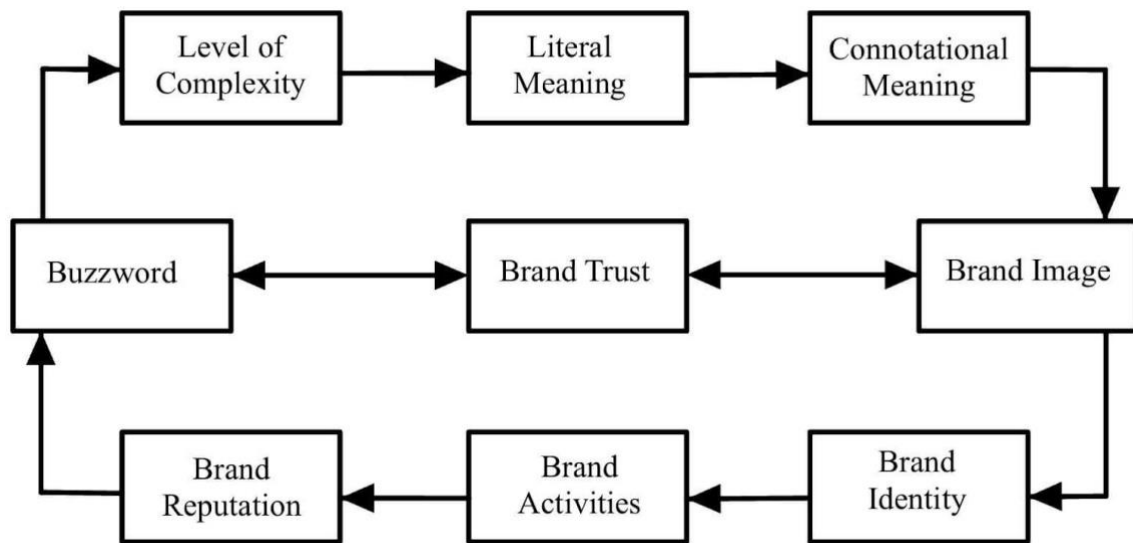


Figure. 3 - Brand Trust Synergy In-Depth Model

Discussion & Conclusion

This paper set out to identify if buzzwords had an impact on consumers' perception of brands, more specifically brand trust, and if so, answer inquiries of how this is manifested and the reason behind it. The aim was to provide researchers and practitioners within the field with an informed foundation to rely on for future references. Both concerning further research and in a managerial sense when proactively designing a communication strategy or reactively adjusting one.

The literary review investigated relevant aspects, including buzzwords, linguistics and brand trust. This was complemented with quantitative and qualitative data by empirically examining primary sources.

The key findings show that a consumer's understanding and perceived trust of a buzzword, like sustainability, are highly connected to that individual's experiences and contextual factors. The message's meaning also influences the interpretation of a buzzword and whether it aligns with the receiver's preconceived notions and

expectations about the sender. It is also affected by the status and relationship between the two actors. Thus, a buzzword in isolation is regarded as more trustworthy than when paired with a brand. However, when integrated with a well-established brand, like Louis Vuitton, a buzzword can increase the consumer's level of trust and commitment to the brand. On the other hand, it might simultaneously alter the brand image. Therefore, Buzzwords, complexity, literal- and connotational meaning; brand image, identity, activities and reputation; and brand trust operate in synergy, continuously influencing each other — as demonstrated in the framework section.

Contribution

Our paper explored the relationship and impact between buzzwords and brand trust. To prior knowledge, these dynamics had never been explored academically before. Our paper aimed to address the current gap in the literature and successfully bring a novel examination and interpretation of brand loyalty and relationship marketing. Our research has established the relationship between words, brands and

trust, proposing a new perspective on brand relationships by introducing two models. As such, our findings and insights contribute to advancing the marketing and linguistic field's knowledge and theories, as well as providing practical application methods for brand managers.

This paper has provided insights that can be applied in industry practices for brand directors or managers across industries. Indeed, brand trust is a pillar of brand loyalty and therefore related to sales. Using the models, brand managers can dive deep into the ecosystem of interactions between words, brand image and trust, effectively controlling their respective effects on brand loyalty. The models allow for a better understanding of the interactions between cognitive and social variables that occur within all brand communications. Hence, managers will be better equipped to design strategies that effectively build brand trust, since strong relationships with consumers are crucial for a brand's survival. Furthermore, understanding the impacts of words may allow managers to communicate better, not only with their customers but with all stakeholders.

Moreover, brands can effectively build stronger loyalty within their target market and ensure a more prevalent market position. As the research has shown, strong brand loyalty creates a barrier to entry, lowering consumers' sensitivity to the competition's marketing efforts. The presented models can support managers in devising the correct strategy to achieve stronger brand trust, brand loyalty and, in the end, a successful business.

The results also underline how brand trust is affected by buzzwords and the brand image, i.e. how the context in relation to a brand changes the consumer's perception. This has several implications since it provides a solid base for future research. Forthcoming research regarding brand management should focus on how brands frame words

within larger contexts to shape the receiver's perceptions and how social and cognitive words and brands interact. Additionally, further exploration into how linguistics interact with brand dimensions will allow for the development of new theories that provide a deeper understanding of a brand and its communications. This article's findings are not limited to buzzwords or brand management alone but can be applied and used in various fields to build upon.

Reflection

This article also sheds light on one of the most important buzzwords today: Sustainability. Although the term is still perceived as something positive, our findings support that it is losing its credibility due to being overused (O'Rourke, 2017). This highlights the changing dynamics of buzzwords and the trusts associated with them. It shows the correlation of how buzzwords can alter the perception of a brand. This is important not only for companies that want to position their brand identity but also for consumers who need to understand the power a buzzword can have on their behaviour, especially since they are living in an ever-growing attention economy and a world that's interconnected, where businesses fight for their attention and investment.

If buzzwords are dealt with incorrectly, they could seriously damage a brand's reputation. A brand that uses a buzzword without delivering its promise risks losing credibility in the public eye. This is evident in the case of greenwashing e.g., where companies have not fulfilled the assurance of sustainable operations but still use sustainability in their messaging (Gatti et al., 2019). A strong brand might survive this, but for a brand that is unknown or has a tarnished reputation, using a buzzword could be seen as a marketing hoax. Buzzwords can, therefore, be regarded as a double-edged sword and must be used with care and precision.

Limitations

The limitations of this study regard the method. Some limitations are connected to choosing a survey as a data collection method. Firstly, there is a response bias since respondents might choose to answer something acceptable rather than how they truly feel. Secondly, the survey had many quantitative questions, limiting the depth of information acquired compared to qualitative methods. Lastly, since the survey was conducted online, it is hard to recognise what personal factors might affect the participants' responses.

Furthermore, the number of respondents (50) was lower than anticipated (100) and the demographic was mainly young university students, which does not

correlate to the society at large. Furthermore, putting sustainability in relation to environmentally friendly and Louis Vuitton might not result in a distinctive comparison between a buzzword and a brand since these terms already carry associations. Future studies should test buzzwords with different brands and words on a larger scale and with a more diverse test group.

An experimental method of data collection was the initial intent of the article, which was to be managed in collaboration with the cognitive department. Unfortunately, this was not possible. Hence, future research on the topic might conduct an experiment instead, resulting in more profound and specific input.

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Index

Sustainability

Hi! We are a group of students attending a masters program at Lund University. We are doing a short survey focused on perception of different adverts and we would be very grateful for your participation. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Your answers will remain anonymous which is why we hope you will provide us with honest feedback.

aloise.eia@gmail.com [Switch accounts](#)



Not shared

* Indicates required question

What is your gender? *

- Male
- Female

What is your age? *

- Under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- Over 60
- Other: _____

2

What are the first three words that come to mind when you read "sustainability"?

Your answer _____

Image 1



What does the word sustainability, for you, convey:

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite	Absolutely
Authenticity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethicality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High-quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Image 2



What does the word environmentally-friendly, for you, convey:

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite	Absolutely
Authenticity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethicality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High-quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3

How transparent and authentic do you perceive the brand Louis Vuitton to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Phony	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Authentic

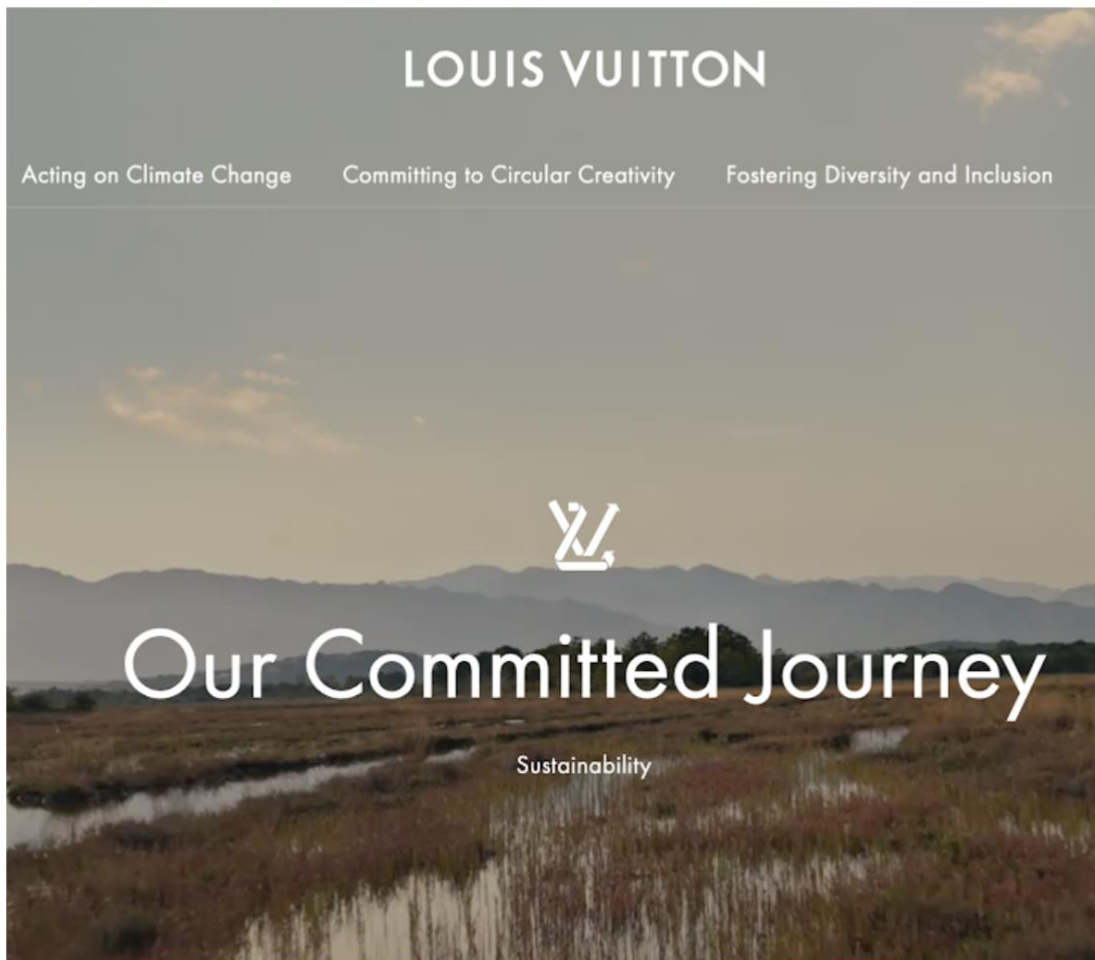
How socially responsible and ethical do you perceive Louis Vuitton's brand to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unethical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ethical

How do you perceive the quality of Louis Vuitton products to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	High

This is part of Louis Vuitton's new communication:



Please keep that in mind for the following questions.

How transparent and authentic do you now perceive LV to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Phoney	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Authentic

How socially responsible and ethical do you perceive LV to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unethical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ethical

How do you perceive the quality of the LV's products to be?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	High

4

Image 1



For you, this image conveys: *

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite	Absolutely
Authenticity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethicality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High-quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Image 2



For you, this image conveys: *

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite	Absolutely
Authenticity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethicality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High-quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which would you trust more?

Image 1

Image 2

5

Sustainability is a typical buzzword. Buzzwords are words that have become fashionable and been used extensively.

Do you think your purchasing decisions are affected by buzzwords?

Yes

No Opinion

No

Other: _____