



ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

Vipiz Is Fast, Vopoz Is Slow: Phonetic Symbolism Is the Way to Go!

Stacey Baxter, University of Newcastle

Jasmina Ilicic, Monash University, Australia

Alicia Kulczynski, University of Newcastle

Tina M. Lowrey, HEC Paris, France

We examine the effect of phonological awareness (ability to identify sounds in words) on children's product evaluations, following exposure to a phonetically manipulated brand name (e.g., Vipiz/Vopoz). We demonstrate that priming children to undertake sound-based processing of marketing stimuli will enhance phonetic symbolism effects for those with low phonological awareness.

[to cite]:

Stacey Baxter, Jasmina Ilicic, Alicia Kulczynski, and Tina M. Lowrey (2016) ,"Vipiz Is Fast, Vopoz Is Slow: Phonetic Symbolism Is the Way to Go!", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 44, eds. Page Moreau and Stefano Puntoni, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 32-36.

[url]:

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1021815/volumes/v44/NA-44>

[copyright notice]:

This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at <http://www.copyright.com/>.

From Sound to Text, the Wide Dependence of Consumer Decision Making on Language

Chairs: Ann Kronrod, Boston University, USA

Tina M. Lowrey, HEC Paris, France

Paper #1: Vipiz is Fast, Vopoz is Slow: Phonetic Symbolism is the Way to Go!

Stacey Baxter, University of Newcastle, Australia
Jasmina Ilicic, Monash University, Australia
Alicia Kulczynski, University of Newcastle, Australia
Tina M. Lowrey, HEC Paris, France

Paper #2: From Language to Behavior: Verbs Lead to Consumer Action

Yan Meng, University of New York, USA
David Luna, Baruch College, USA
Sandor Czellar, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Paper #3: Everyone Likes This Movie! Consensus Language Increases the Influence of Weak Ties over Strong Ties in Product Recommendations

Jeff Lee, MIT, USA
Ann Kronrod, Boston University, USA

Paper #4: The Hidden Costs of Paying Your Reviewers: How Incentives Affect the Language of Online Reviews and Subsequently their Perceived Helpfulness and their Persuasiveness

Peeter W. J. Verlegh, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands
Lotte M. Willemsen, HU University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands
Eline Y. M. Zwinkels, MediaTest, Netherlands

SESSION OVERVIEW

This session reflects the increasing interest and need for research on language in marketing. Advancing our understanding of the inseparable connection between language and consumer decision-making, the papers address the questions: How does language impact and sometimes *sway* consumption decisions and perceptions? What elements of language are the source of this influence? What conclusions can marketers derive from findings of language research in marketing? Together, the works illustrate how every word, and even every sound, can influence consumer perceptions, decisions, and actions. The four papers are organized by ascending order of language element size, starting with sounds, continuing with words, through phrases, and all the way to texts.

Baxter, Ilicic, Kulczynski and Lowrey will reveal novel discoveries in *sound* symbolism. The authors find that children with lower phonological ability (e.g. identifying word sounds) are less able to infer brand attributes based on the sounds of brand names, but this ability can be instantly improved through in-ad games. This finding is especially relevant today, when children are more involved in family consumption decisions, and when many brand names are meaningless and people infer their meaning based on their sound. Meng, Czellar and Luna focus on *words*. The authors demonstrate that using verbs in marketing communication (“grasp it with ease”) leads consumers to take immediate actions, such as clicking a link, whereas nouns (“easy grip”) lead to delayed action. The authors explain this link demonstrating that verbs activate an implemental mindset that leads to immediate action. Lee and Kronrod’s work takes us to the *phrase* level. This work focuses on the way consensus phrases used by social network participants, such as “everyone likes this movie,” change the way strong and weak ties influence our consumption decisions. While people usually rely on opinions of strong ties, when consensus phrases are used, weak ties achieve higher persua-

siveness than strong ties. The authors demonstrate that this is because a consensus expression is interpreted as relating to a larger group when mentioned by a weak tie, compared with a strong tie. Lastly, Willemsen, Verlegh and Zwinkels focus on *texts*. The authors find that, compared with small/no incentives, large incentives change the language consumers use in their product reviews, such as adding aesthetic elements, more emotional and less rational arguments, etc. However, readers deem these reviews less useful than unrewarded reviews, and they elicit lower purchase intentions. The authors make an exciting discovery which bears relevance to today’s practice of offering smaller and larger incentives to consumers to leave product reviews.

Together the works in this session highlight the dominant role of language in consumer behavior and propose important insights for marketing theory and practice on all levels of language inquiry. The developing interest in learning about consumers from analyzing textual Big Data promises a wide turnout for this session. As ACR2016 in Berlin reflects an especially multinational and naturally multilingual assembly, this session expects broad discussion among attendants interested in marketing analytics, communication, advertising, branding, and in particular those who got the Wanderlust virus.

Vipiz is Fast, Vopoz is Slow: Phonetic Symbolism is the Way to Go!

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Marketing research on phonetic symbolism has studied both application (i.e., using sounds in brand names to enhance preferences and signal attributes) and process. Yorkston and Menon (2004) identified phonetic symbolism as an automatic phenomenon for adults. Recent research, however, shows these effects are developmental and rely on the acquisition of language-based skills. Baxter, Kulczynski, and Ilicic (2014) demonstrated that only older children (above 10 years old) possess proficiencies for phonetic-based judgments. This research contributes by examining developmental differences in children’s phonological awareness (an ability to recognize sounds in words) on phonetic-based inferences. It is proposed that an awareness of phonemes can be primed, enhancing phonetic symbolism effects in children with lower levels of phonological awareness.

Study 1 demonstrated the moderating effect of phonological awareness on product evaluations. It was expected that effects consistent with phonetic symbolism theory would strengthen as phonological awareness heightens. Participants were 161 Australian children (ages 6-16) in a between-subjects experiment (82 male, 79 female; $M_{age} = 9.45$). Participants were shown a print advertisement for a fictitious scooter (Vipiz/Vopoz). Participants evaluated the scooter’s speed/weight/size (7-point scales), then completed a phoneme-counting task to assess phonological awareness (3 practice words/20 test words, e.g., “*butter* has how many sounds in it?”). A Product Attribute Index (PAI) was created, combining participants’ judgments of speed/weight/size. Results (PROCESS, $n = 10,000$, Model 1) demonstrated that neither product size ($\beta = .253, p = .221$) nor phonological awareness ($\beta = .014, p = .102$) were significant predictors of product attribute evaluations. However, phonological awareness was a significant moderator of judgments ($\beta = -.070, p = .031, R^2\Delta = .028$). Simple effects analysis showed that the ‘Vipiz’ scooter was perceived as faster/lighter/smaller than the ‘Vopoz’ scooter; however, this effect was not found in low phonological awareness children.

Study 2 examined whether exposure to a phonological awareness priming task influenced product evaluations. Participants were 184 Australian children (105 male, 79 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 9.40$) in a 2 (task-first vs. task-last) \times 2 (front- vs. back-vowel) factorial experiment. Participants in the task-first conditions completed a phoneme-counting task, were then shown a print advertisement for ice-cream (Fipple/Fupple), and asked to evaluate the ice-cream's hardness/smoothness/creaminess (7-point scales; creating a PAI). Participants in the task-last conditions viewed the print advertisement, completed the product evaluations, then completed the phoneme-counting task. It was expected that completing the phoneme-counting task prior to product evaluations would act as a prime, strengthening phonetic symbolism effects for children low in phonological awareness, by heightening their recognition of phonemes. An ANOVA model was estimated with a significant main effect for vowel sound ($F(1, 180) = 16.09, p < .001$). Consistent with theory, a product paired with a brand name containing a back (front) vowel was perceived as more (less) soft/smooth/creamy (Back Vowel: $M_{\text{PAI}} = 4.63$; Front Vowel: $M_{\text{PAI}} = 3.88$). No other significant main or interaction effects were observed. Next, results (PROCESS, $n = 10\,000$, Model 3) demonstrated that task order ($\beta = -3.96, p = .034$) and phonological awareness ($\beta = -.128, p = .046$) were significant predictors of phonetic-based judgments. As expected, a significant three-way interaction was observed between product size, task sequence, and phonological awareness ($\beta = -.317, p = .038, R^2\Delta = .022$). Results of simple effect analysis demonstrated that the interaction (brand name \times task sequence) did not have a significant effect on phonetic-based judgments for participants with higher levels of phonological awareness; however, it was significant at lower levels of phonological awareness.

Study 3 demonstrated the effectiveness of phonological priming in a marketing context, embedding aspects of a phonological awareness task in a game-based print advertisement. Participants were 186 Australian children (106 male, 80 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 9.51, SD = 2.57$) in a 2 (embedded task vs. absent) \times 2 (front- vs. back-vowel) factorial experiment. Participants were shown a print advertisement for a ball paired with a brand name (Inik/Onok). A phonological awareness task was absent or embedded in the advertisement. Participants evaluated the ball's hardness/lightness/size (7-point scales; creating a PAI). Participants then completed a phoneme-counting task. ANOVA results revealed a significant main effect for vowel sound ($F(1, 186) = 30.72, p < .001$). It was posited that the priming effect of an embedded phonological awareness task would be stronger for those who have lower levels of phonological awareness. Consistent with theory, a product paired with a name containing a front (back) vowel was perceived as more (less) small/light/hard (Back Vowel: $M_{\text{PAI}} = 3.46$; Front Vowel: $M_{\text{PAI}} = 4.10$). As anticipated, a significant interaction was found between vowel sound and task presence ($F(1, 186) = 5.72, p = .018, \eta^2 = .030$), whereby effects consistent with theory were strengthened for participants exposed to elements of a phonological awareness task (embedded in the advertisement) prior to providing product attribute evaluations. Further, results (PROCESS, $n = 10\,000$, Model 3) revealed that phonological prime ($\beta = .488, p = .048$) and product weight ($\beta = .610, p = .026$) were significant predictors of product judgments. As expected, a significant three-way interaction was observed between product size, phonological prime, and phonological awareness ($\beta = .044, p = .014, R^2\Delta = .011$). Consistent with Study 2, results of simple effects analysis demonstrated that the interaction (product weight and phonological prime) did not have a significant effect on product evaluations at higher phonological awareness levels, but was significant at lower levels.

In conclusion, this research builds on the current understanding of the process underlying sound symbolism effects. Results reveal

that children with lower levels of phonological awareness are unable to formulate phonetic-based judgments consistent with theory, but phonological awareness priming overcomes developmental language-based barriers, supporting phonetic symbolism effects in early developmental groups. Phonological awareness tasks encourage children with low levels of phonological awareness to become aware of sounds in words. For children high in phonological awareness, such priming had no impact on phonetic symbolism effects. These results provide marketers with a method to overcome boundaries of phonetic symbolism effects in branded communications targeted towards children.

From Language to Behavior: Verbs Lead to Consumer Action

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consider an online display ad for Aston-Martin with the tagline "Power. Beauty. Soul." Will it lead to more clicks than Jaguar's "Born to perform"? This research provides an answer to that question (verbs lead to higher click through rates than nouns), and explains the psychological process underlying the phenomenon (verbs activate an implemental mindset that leads to immediate action). The growing body of research on the marketing effects of language has devoted little attention to the direct influence of language on consumer actions or choice (for exceptions, see Cheema and Patrick 2008; Kronrod et al., 2012a; Schmitt and Zhang 1998). Our six studies provide empirical evidence that the type of words used by marketers can influence consumer actions. According to neuroscience research, verb processing should result in a pattern of brain activation similar to when individuals actually perform actions. This is because verbs are linked to the frontal lobe of the brain. The frontal lobe includes motor and premotor areas that process actions (Damasio and Tranel 1993; Daniele et al. 1994; Warrington and McCarthy 1987). Therefore, verbs, compared to nouns, should have a stronger mental association with actions and an implemental (vs. deliberative) mindset. In related research, Albarracin et al. (2008) describes how priming individuals with action-oriented words (e.g., *go, movement*) instead of inaction words (e.g., *stop, blockage*) leads to the activation of action goals, which results in a higher likelihood of individuals performing any action that is presented to them. We suggest this is not always the case, and that the lexical category of the action word (verb vs. noun) matters in choice situations because verbs lead consumers to acting now rather than later, even if acting later might include an action of greater magnitude. This is because verbs activate an implemental mindset vs. a deliberative mindset.

Study 1

We designed a study based on the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998). As predicted, participants responded significantly faster when associating verbs to actions ($M=1282.49\text{ms}$) than when associating nouns to actions ($M=1525.34\text{ms}$, $t(133) = -7.00, p < .001$). They also responded significantly faster when associating nouns to objects than when associating verbs to objects ($d = .345, p < .001$).

Study 2

Respondents must choose the best of several mobile phone plans, given a scenario of how they supposedly use the phone. We investigate whether priming respondents with action verbs leads to choosing (a) the fast, easy option of a flat-rate, unlimited mobile plan, or (b) the optimal plan that fits their usage scenario. The latter option would require effort—that is, comparing attributes and analyzing the fit of the plan with the usage scenario. Choosing the unlimited plan

would be consistent with an implemental mindset and choosing the optimal option would be consistent with a deliberative mindset.

Method

Respondents are primed with one of four conditions in a 2 (Lexical category: verbs vs. nouns) x 2 (Goal activation: Action vs. Inaction words). Four mobile phone plans are presented to the respondents simultaneously and they are asked to choose one given a scenario specifying usage.

Results

A significant interaction ($\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 3.66; p < .05$) shows that action verbs priming made people choose the easy/default/no-effort option (62%) more often than the optimal plan (38%). The effect of action goals vs. inaction goals is moderated by lexical category: nouns do not experience an action goal effect. Verbs appear to lead to an implemental mindset. We provide evidence of the moderating role of lexical category on Albarracín et al.'s (2008) findings in a consumer choice context.

Study 3

Here we further investigate whether consumers exposed to a verb-intensive ad are more likely to take immediate action than consumers exposed to a noun-intensive ad. All verbs used are action verbs. We also examine the process underlying the effect. Because verbs represent actions, the activation of verbs will result in an implemental mindset (Gollwitzer and Bayer 1999), which will lead to consumer action.

Method

Participants saw an ad that consisted of an image of an identical pen accompanied by either verb-intensive copy (e.g. writes smoothly; grasp it with ease) or noun-intensive copy (e.g. smooth ink stream; precise grip). After seeing the ad, participants were told that they were about to make a real choice and would receive a pen from the experimenter. They could either (a) get the advertised pen right away by clicking on a button on the screen, or (b) click on another button to go to another screen where they could find information about a larger set of pens they could choose from. Our dependent measure was whether they chose the pen right away or delayed their choice to search for further information on the other pens. Clicking to choose the pen immediately would be consistent with an implemental mindset. Participants then listed the thoughts that came to their minds during the choice task. Next, they performed a lexical decision task (Lemhöfer and Dijkstra 2004), consisting of classifying stimuli on a computer screen as words (including several implemental verbs; e.g., decide and take) or non-words.

Results

In the verb condition, participants were more likely to choose the advertised pen right away compared with participants in the noun condition ($M_{verb} = 44\%$ vs. $M_{noun} = 29\%$; $\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 4.23; p < .05$). Also in the verb condition, implemental verbs were more accessible in participants' minds, as shown by the thoughts measure and the results from the lexical decision task.

Studies 4-5 (Field Studies)

Study 4 consisted of placing two versions of a display ad, verb- and noun-intensive, in the Google network. We found that the verb-intensive ad led to a higher click-through rate ($M_{verb} = .51\%$ vs. $M_{noun} = .44\%$; $\chi^2(1, N = 144,430) = 4.13; p < .05$). Study 5 found that consumers tended to pick up more often a printed flyer when it included a high incidence of verbs ($M_{verb} = 1.58, S.D. = .67$ vs. $M_{noun} = .91, S.D. = .94; F(1,21) = 3.96, p = .06$).

We make the connection between psycholinguistic theory and the behavior of consumers and qualify previous research on the ac-

tivation of general action goals in response to action words. We provide evidence that using verbs in marketing communications leads to immediate (versus delayed) action and product choice, sometimes resulting in suboptimal choices. Such verb-behavior connections predominantly exist when consumers are in low-elaboration purchase situations (e. g., high cognitive load). The effect of verbs on behavior is mediated by the activation of an implemental mindset.

Everyone Likes This Movie! Consensus Language Increases the Influence of Weak Ties over Strong Ties in Product Recommendations

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When making decisions about products, people often rely on the opinion of close ties (friends, family) more than on weak ties (casual acquaintances) (Alvaro and Crano, 1997; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; David and Turner, 2001). But in some cases weak ties may be more influential (Granovetter, 1973; Kim, Zhang, and Li, 2008). We suggest that one such case is when a tie refers to public consensus (e.g. "everybody has seen this movie", Drew, 2003). We predict that in this situation, *weak* ties may be more influential than strong ties, because consensus expressed by a weak tie is perceived to convey the attitudes and behaviors of a larger network of individuals, implying greater consensus about the product. Further, we suggest that referring to consensus is useful in contexts where a person benefits from conforming to the norm. For instance, when recommending products that bear social risk, such as public consumption products (e.g. Fawcett and Miller 1975), weak ties that use consensus expressions may have an especially strong influence. In four studies, we examine the role of weak ties in influencing judgments and decisions on public consumption products (Studies 1 and 2) and public behaviors (Studies 3 and 4).

In **Study 1**, 206 MTurk participants were assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (tie-strength: weaker/stronger) x 2 (consensus: yes/no) between-subjects design. Consistent with previous conceptualizations of tie-strength in consumer research (Ryu & Feick, 2007; Zhang, Feick, & Mittal, 2014), participants were first told to provide the first name of either their closest friend (stronger-tie) or a casual acquaintance (weaker-tie). Next, participants read a hypothetical tweet from the person about a new film, containing consensus or no-consensus language ("This is the film everybody is (my friends are) talking about"). Participants estimated the general consensus about the film (e.g. the percentage of the population that would eventually see it). A 2-way ANOVA revealed the predicted interaction ($F(1,202)=6.96, p<.01$): In the consensus language condition, weaker ties generated higher consensus in their statements ($M=64.1$) than stronger ties ($M=52.6; F(1,202)=6.92, p<.01$). However in the no-consensus language condition, participants did not differ in their consensus perceptions whether they read the phrase as tweeted by a weaker tie ($M=54.8$) or a stronger tie ($M=60.0; F(1,202)=1.19, p<.1$).

In **Study 2**, we hypothesized that weaker ties using consensus language would be more influential in the case of public (versus private) consumption. We assigned 340 MTurk participants to one of eight conditions in a 2 (tie-strength: weaker/stronger) x 2 (consensus: yes/no) x 2 (product framing: public vs. private) between-subjects design. Participants read about a hypothetical brand of cellphone cases. In the public condition, the case was described as a "trend setter," and with a "distinct, recognizable pattern;" in the private condition, the case was described as "durable," and with "advanced, protecting materials." As in study 1, participants first wrote the name of a weak/strong tie, and then imagined the person describing the phone case using/not using consensus language. Results revealed a three-way

interaction on behavioral intentions ($F(1,332)=7.59, p<.01$), product attitudes ($F(1,332)=4.95, p<.05$), and consensus ($F(1,332)=9.27, p<.01$). Specifically, participants who read consensus language from a weaker-tie expressed higher intentions to try the cell phone case ($M=5.39$) than participants who read such language from a stronger tie ($M=4.24$; $F(1,332)=14.00, p<.001$). However, this effect disappeared in the non-consensus language condition ($F(1,332)=0.14, p<.1$). A similar pattern of results was also found for product attitudes and consensus. Mediated moderation analysis (Hayes, 2013) suggests that perceived consensus mediates the effect of tie strength and language on product attitudes and on behavioral intentions.

In **Study 3**, we extend our previous findings to actual public decision-making. 185 undergraduate students in a lecture classroom participated in a 2 (tie-strength: weaker/stronger) x 2 (decision: public/private) between-subjects design. Participants decided whether to pledge not to drink and drive, and depending on condition, their decision was either made public or remained private. Additionally, we told the students that we ran a preliminary survey on a few members of the classroom, and that a student next to them (stronger tie) or across the room from them (weaker tie) believed that “people are not signing this pledge.” Measures on closeness and frequency of interaction confirmed the effectiveness of our tie-strength manipulation. Furthermore, a log-linear analysis revealed a predicted interaction ($\chi^2(1)=4.55, p<.05$). In the public pledge condition, statements from weaker ties influenced the declining of the pledge ($M=16.3%$) more than statements from strong ties ($M=4.1%$, $\chi^2(1)=4.01, p<.05$). However, in the private pledge condition, students did not differ whether they read a statement from a weaker tie ($M=32.0%$) or a stronger tie ($M=40.5%$, $\chi^2(1)=0.67, p<.1$).

Study 4 builds on the results of Study 3 via a Facebook field experiment. 30 student confederates each sent Facebook messages to 10 strong and 10 weak ties, inviting them to click a link to a personality test; thus, messages were sent to 600 Facebook ties. Half of the students made a consensus reference (“everybody is talking about this test”) and the other half did not mention consensus. We created four “test” links according to the four conditions and counted the number of clicks on each link. While strong ties’ click rates nearly doubled (22.6% vs. 43.3%) when participants used consensus, weak ties’ click rates nearly than quintupled with consensus reference (4.7% vs. 22.6%, $Z=-3.77, p<.001$). These results suggest that while weak ties may be less trustworthy in our link-forwarding context, their use of consensus expressions accelerates their social influence relative to similar use by strong ties.

Our findings suggest evidence of “the strength of weak ties” when weak ties use consensus language describing publicly consumed products or publicly-visible decisions. These findings hold across multiple, literature-based, conceptualizations of tie-strength and appear to be driven by the greater perceived scope of the consensus when expressed by weak ties. The moderation of the weak tie effect in public (versus private) contexts reflects the importance of weak tie consensus reference in contexts where impression management concerns may increase interest towards a product or a behavior.

The Hidden Costs of Paying Your Reviewers: How Incentives Affect the Language of Online Reviews and Subsequently their Perceived Helpfulness and their Persuasiveness

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Online customer reviews (often referred to as eWOM) have a strong impact on product evaluations and sales (e.g., Babic et al., 2016). Such reviews are an important source of information for

consumers who are looking for information to assist them in their purchase decisions. Review platforms like Yelp!, Epinions and TripAdvisor, provide value to consumers as an independent sources of product information. To attract customer reviews, review platforms not only make it as easy as possible to provide reviews, but they may also provide incentives to consumers who place reviews on their website. But are such rewarded reviews equally helpful as unrewarded reviews? Recent research on incentives in word of mouth suggests that this is not the case: Verlegh, Ryu, Tuk and Feick (2013) have shown that rewarded referrals have less impact on other consumers than unrewarded referrals. Verlegh and colleagues suggest that this effect is due to a process in which the presence of rewards leads the audience to infer that the word of mouth was motivated by ulterior motives.

Of course, readers may not always be aware of the fact that a reviewer received a reward for placing a review. We argue, however, that this does not mean that rewarded reviews are equally effective as unrewarded ones, in this case. More specifically, we suggest that rewards may affect the language that is used by the reviewing consumers. Building on research on extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation, we expect that reviewers who are rewarded may invest less effort in the process (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Several studies have examined the factors that make a review helpful to consumers (e.g., Pan & Zhang, 2011; Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner & de Ridder, 2011). This research has shown that reviews are regarded as more helpful when they are longer and contain more arguments (Pan & Zhang, 2011), and when they contain diverse arguments - similar to two-sidedness in advertising, are more balanced and *less* extreme, and make less use of rhetorical tactics aimed at persuasion (Willemsen et al., 2011).

In our **first Study**, we therefore investigate whether the extrinsic motivation that is induced by rewards may lead to reviews that are less helpful, because they are more extreme, contain less arguments and are shorter than unrewarded reviews. In addition, we will look at some of the textual characteristics that may result from investing less effort in one’s writing, such as grammatical errors, and a reduced use of structuring devices such as white spaces and appropriate punctuation. Such characteristics have been shown to reduce the value that readers attach to online comments (Otterbacher, 2011). Study 1 was a content analysis comparing reviews posted on an actual review website ($n=700$) during: (1) a period during which reviews were rewarded with a small incentive (5-dollar book voucher); (2) a period during which reviews were rewarded with a larger incentive (chance of winning an iPad); and (3) a non-promotional period. To analyze the content of the reviews, we developed a coding scheme based on prior research (Otterbacher, 2011; Willemsen et al., 2011), coding language use and other content characteristics. Two independent coders analyzed the reviews. We found that valence and average ratings were unaffected by incentives, but did find several of the expected differences in language use and paralinguistic features. Specifically, reviews from the large incentive period (vs. small and no-incentive) contained more paralinguistic elements that are commonly used to persuade an audience of a message. These included multiple punctuation (!!!), blank spaces, authority arguments (“I’m an expert”), and emotional arguments (“I love this product”). Also, these reviews were less likely to contain rational arguments (“the 4x-optical zoom gives vivid photos”).

Study 2 tested whether consumers are able to differentiate rewarded reviews from unrewarded reviews based on these linguistic characteristics, and furthermore, if these language differences affect review and product attitudes ($n=114$). To address this aim, we conducted a one-factor between-subjects experiment with two cells.

Participants were randomly exposed to a positive review from a restaurant with either (a) language characteristics from a rewarded review, or (b) language characteristics from an unrewarded review. Language characteristics were based on findings in study 1, and varied in the use of multiple punctuation cues (!!!), blank spaces, authority arguments (“I have eaten in many similar restaurants”), emotional arguments (“I felt welcome”), and rational arguments (i.e., discussing criteria for good food).

Results showed that rewarded reviews were considered less helpful than unrewarded reviews ($M = 4.43$ vs. $M = 5.12$, $F(1, 113) = 10.99$, $p < .001$) and raised lower purchase intentions ($M = 4.41$ vs. $M = 5.10$, $F(1, 113) = 12.32$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, helpfulness was found to mediate the effect of review type (rewarded/unrewarded) on purchase intention (estimate = $-.46$, 95% BCI = $-.80$; $-.19$), according to bootstrapping analyses (PROCESS, model 4, $n = 5000$).

Together these results suggest that rewarded reviews differ from unrewarded reviews in terms of linguistic and paralinguistic characteristics. These differences rendered rewarded reviews less helpful in the eyes of consumers, which has negative consequences for their intentions to purchase reviewed products.

REFERENCES

- Albarracín, Dolores, Ian M. Handley, Kenji Noguchi, Kathleen C. McCulloch, Hong Li, Joshua Leeper, Rick Brown, Allison Earl, and William P. Hart (2008). Increasing and decreasing motor and cognitive output: a model of general action and inaction goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(3), 510-523.
- Alvaro, E. M., & Crano, W. D. (1997). Indirect minority influence: Evidence for leniency in source evaluation and counterargumentation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(5), 949.
- Babic, A., Sotgiu, F., de Valck, K., and Bijmolt, T.H.A. (2016). The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales: a meta-analytic review of platform, product, and metric factors. *Journal of Marketing Research*, forthcoming.
- Baxter, S.M., Kulczynski, A. and Ilicic, J. (2014), “Revisiting the automaticity of phonetic symbolism effects”, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(4), 448-51.
- Cheema, Amar, and Vanessa M. Patrick (2008), “Anytime versus only: mind-sets moderate the effect of expansive versus restrictive frames on promotion evaluation,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45 (4), 462-472.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55(1), 591-621.
- Damasio, Antonio R. and Daniel Tranel (1993), “Nouns and Verbs are Retrieved with Differently Distributed Neural Systems,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 90 (11), 4957-4960.
- Daniele, Antonio, Laura Giustolisi, M. Caterina Silveri, Cesare Colosimo, and Guido Gainotti (1994), “Evidence for a Possible Neuroanatomical Basis for Lexical Processing of Nouns and Verbs,” *Neuropsychologia*, 32 (11), 1325-1341.
- David, B., & Turner, J. C. (2001). Majority and minority influence: A single process self categorization analysis. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2001-06672-005>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology: Vol. 1* (pp. 416-437). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Drew, P. (2003). Precision and Exaggeration in Interaction. *American Sociological Review*, 68(6), 917-938.
- Gollwitzer, Peter M. and Ute Bayer (1999), “Deliberative Versus Implemental Mindsets in the Control of Action,” *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology*, 403-422.
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1.
- Greenwald, Anthony G., Debbie E. McGhee, and Jordan LK Schwartz (1998), “Measuring Individual Differences in Implicit Cognition: The Implicit Association Test,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74 (6), 1464.
- Kim, K., Zhang, M., & Li, X. (2008). Effects of Temporal and Social Distance on Consumer Evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(4), 706-713.
- Kronrod, Ann, Amir Grinstein, and Luc Wathieu (2012a), “Enjoy! Hedonic consumption and compliance with assertive messages,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (1), 51-61.
- Kronrod, Ann, A. Grinstein, and L. Wathieu (2012b), “Go green! Should environmental messages be so assertive?,” *Journal of Marketing*, 76(1), 95-102.
- Lemhöfer, Kristin and Ton Dijkstra (2004), “Recognizing Cognates and Interlingual Homographs: Effects of Code Similarity in Language-Specific and Generalized Lexical Decision,” *Memory & Cognition*, 32 (4), 533-550.
- Otterbacher, J. (2011), Being heard in review communities: communication tactics and review prominence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 16: 424-444.
- Pan, Y., Zhang, J.Q. (2011). Born unequal: a study of the helpfulness of user-generated product reviews, *Journal of Retailing*, 87, 598-612.
- Ryu, G., & Feick, L. (2007). A Penny for Your Thoughts: Referral Reward Programs and Referral Likelihood. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(1), 84-94.
- Schmitt, Bernd H. and Shi Zhang (1998), “Language Structure and Categorization: A Study of Classifiers in Consumer Cognition, Judgment, and Choice,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (2), 108-122.
- Stephen B. Fawcett, Miller, L. Keith (1975). Training public-speaking behavior: An experimental analysis and social validation. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 8(2), 125-135.
- Verlegh, P.W.J., Ryu, G., Tuk, M.A. & Feick, L.E. (2013). Receiver responses to rewarded referrals: the motive inferences framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(6), 669-682.
- Warrington, Elizabeth K. and Rosaleen A. McCarthy (1987), “Categories of Knowledge further Fractionations and an Attempted Integration,” *Brain*, 110 (5), 1273-1296.
- Willemsen, L.M., Neijens, P.C., Bronner, F., & de Ridder, J.A. (2011). ‘Highly recommended!’ The content characteristics and perceived usefulness of online consumer reviews. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17 (1), 19-38.
- Yorkston, Eric, and G. Menon (2004), “A sound idea: Phonetic effects of brand names on consumer judgments,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 43-51.
- Zhang, Y., Feick, L., & Mittal, V. (2014). How Males and Females Differ in Their Likelihood of Transmitting Negative Word of Mouth. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(6), 1097-1108.