To Swe*r or Not To Swear? Impact of Profane Language in Social Media Ads on Brand Perception and Trust

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Abstract

Title: To Swe*r or Not To Swear? Impact of Profane Language in Social Media Ads on Brand Perception and Trust

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This research aims to explore the strategic use of profanity in social media advertising, focusing on its effects on brand perceptions such as emotionality, authenticity, trustworthiness, and brand personality. By examining how different styles of profanity (uncensored, censored, euphemistic) and language proficiency (native vs. non-native) influence consumer attitudes, the study seeks to demystify the role of swearing in marketing communication.

Through a 3 profanity style x 2 language proficiency between-subjects design, this study revealed that incorporating the heaviest forms of profanity, uncensored or censored, can effectively enhance perceptions of authenticity, hedonic qualities, and brand personality traits such as aggressiveness and activity. Conversely, for brands aiming to emphasize simplicity and sophistication, the use of euphemistic swear words in social media advertisements offers a compelling solution. These insights provide actionable guidance for brands to tailor their communication strategies based on their desired image and audience expectations.

Keywords: Profanity; Swear Word Style; Language; Hedonic; Utilitarian; Brand Trust; Brand Personality; Authenticity; Aggressiveness; Activity; Simplicity; Brand Perceptions.

Sumário

Título: Usar ou Não Usar P*lavrões? Impacto de Língua Profana em anúncios das redes sociais nas Perceções e Confiança na Marca

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Esta tese de mestrado tem como objetivo explorar o uso estratégico de palavrões em publicidade nas redes sociais, com destaque nos seus impactos sobre as perceções de marca, como emocionalidade, autenticidade, confiança e personalidade da marca. Ao examinar como diferentes estilos de palavrões (não censurados, censurados, eufemísticos) e o nível de proficiência linguística (nativos vs. não nativos) influenciam as atitudes dos consumidores, o estudo procura desmistificar o papel dos palavrões na comunicação de marketing.

Através de um design experimental 3 estilo de profanidade x 2 proficiência na língua entre sujeitos, o estudo revelou que a incorporação das formas mais pesadas de palavrões, não censurados ou censurados, pode efetivamente melhorar as perceções de autenticidade, qualidades hedónicas e traços de personalidade da marca, como agressividade e dinamismo. Por outro lado, para marcas que pretendem enfatizar simplicidade e sofisticação, o uso de palavrões eufemísticos em anúncios nas redes sociais oferece uma solução convincente. Estas conclusões fornecem orientações práticas para que as marcas adaptem as suas estratégias de comunicação com base na imagem desejada e nas expectativas do consumidor.

Palavras-chave: Profanidade; Estilo de Palavrão; Língua; Hedónico; Utilitário; Confiança na Marca; Personalidade da Marca; Autenticidade; Agressividade; Dinamismo; Simplicidade; Perceções de Marca.

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1. Introduction

The use of profanity is one of the well-established taboos in our society but, not as much as it once was. Through the evolution of modern communication, first with cable TV and, specially, second through the internet and widespread of social media, swearing as become rather usual. The digital world as emerged as a parallel to social interactions where people feel less exposed to real life censorships. And if this parallel dimension of human communication can serve as an indicator, people want to be able to swear, to hear swearing, and to consume content with swearing, (Bergen, 2016). In fact, considering that 1% of our daily spoken words are pronouns of first-person plural (like "we" and "our"), the fact that between 0,5% and 0,7% of daily spoken words are profanity becomes certainly noteworthy, (Jay, 2009). The percentage of swearing is even more impressive online, where 8,9% of Yelp reviews and 7,7% of twitter post contain at least one profane word, (Wang et al., 2014).

With the rise of globalization and the rapid spread of information in the modern era, we are living in a time of heightened accountability for disrespect and ignorance, with the goal of preventing harmful ideologies and rejecting ignorance as an excuse for misconduct (JN, 2024). While this increased scrutiny is largely positive, societal change often swings to extremes before achieving balance.

Currently, there is significant sensitivity to political correctness, particularly in social media censorship. Platforms like Instagram enforce strict guidelines on monetizable content, restricting categories like discrimination and obscenity. Despite these measures, Meta does not explicitly censor profanity unless it is hateful or insulting (Community Standards, 2024). This societal pressure makes brands hesitant to use humor or shocking elements in advertisements.

Considering how inherent profanity is to human behavior, its capacity to convey strong emotions, and its dual nature as both a tool for connection and a potential source of controversy, we sought to explore how it could be strategically leveraged in marketing to build stronger, more relatable brands. Leveraging swearing on brand's communication strategies remains underexplored, despite its prevalence and impact in human communication, likely due to the taboo surrounding profanity. Our study aims to expand on this gap, shedding light on its potential applications and implications for brand development, making our research question as follows:

"How does the level of profanity in social media advertisements influence brand perceptions, including emotionality, authenticity, trustworthiness, and brand personality dimensions?"

2. Literature Review

The following literature review is structured to draw on insights from previous scientific research, providing a comprehensive foundation for our study and supporting the development of our hypotheses along the way. It is organized into two main topics: profanity and brand perceptions. The profanity section assesses the definition of profanity, its role in human communication, how it is perceived, the effects of different language proficiencies on profanity, and its use in marketing and brand communication. The brand perceptions section focuses on critical constructs such as brand personality, brand trust, and the dichotomy of hedonic versus utilitarian perceptions, which serve as essential framework for analyzing the effects of profanity.

2.1. Defining profanity & swearing in human communication

A widely accepted understanding is that the meaning behind the power of swear words derives from societal taboos, rooted in cultural and social norms, rather than from the language itself. (Bergen, 2016). There are taboos about bodily functions, social minorities, copulation, defecation, the supernatural and Gods…and it is not difficult to think of swear words in each of these categories. Profane language translates to the same concepts in most languages, exactly because taboo words reflect societal pressures that are roughly constant across cultures, (Bergen, 2016; Fairman, 2006). Profanity connection to taboos is what gives it the power to evoke such strong emotional reactions, (Dahl et al., 2003).

However, swear words are not always taboo. Depending on culture, context, settings and relationships between speakers, profanity use might be more or less acceptable, (Allan & Burridge, 2006). For instance, Japanese culture lacks words that are traditionally considered swear words whereas under strict Sharia law, blasphemy is punishable by death, (Bergen, 2016). On different contexts swear words cannot be interpretated literally. Most often the speaker is swearing emphatically (e.g., "This is fucking awesome!") or cathartically (e.g., "Holy shit! That hurts"), and in these contexts swearing serves as an adverb, therefore, does not reflect

the literal meaning of the profane word, (Jay, 1992). Swearing might enhance solidarity in a casual setting, (Daly et al., 2004), whereas it is less suitable in formal or authoritative environments. In alignment with this, researchers found it entirely inappropriate for a student to swear in a dean's office, while the same was not true about two students in a dorm setting, (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008).

Profanity serves various communicative purposes, such as expressing emotions (commonly frustration, anger, or surprise), establishing social hierarchies, and fostering a sense of community, (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Jay & Janschewitz, 2012; Jay 2009). For example, profanity can draw attention to issues, confront others, or create solidarity among like-minded individuals. In some cases, it is used humorously or cathartically, providing relief and positive emotional effects through humor or sarcasm (Wang et al., 2024; Bergen 2016).

Swearing is a natural part of human communication and emerges early in language development. Children as young as two years old begin using profanity, and by preadolescence, their vocabulary of swear words is close to adults' vocabulary (Jay & Janschewitz, 2012). Profanity is so intrinsic to human communication that even in cases of brain damage that disable most linguistic faculties, the capacity to swear remains intact, highlighting its reflexive and automatic nature (Bergen, 2016).

Profanity is often broadly defined. Feldman et al., (2017) defines profane language as the portion of a language deemed inappropriate to use in non-casual settings. It is however very difficult to precisely and universally infer what is considered impolite or rude, as these constructs are extremely dependent on cultural norms and individual personality, (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Swear words can be expressed through three speech styles: uncensored (e.g., "fuck"), euphemistic (e.g., "frick"), or censored (e.g., "f*ck"), (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Euphemistic and censored styles retain their association with the original taboo, thus still preserve meaningful, (Burridge, 2012). Nevertheless, swear words have been undergoing a deslexicalization process, causing their original meaning to gradually fade, (Fairman, 2006).

In summary, uncensored profanity evokes stronger emotional reactions due to its raw connection to taboos and emotional expression, whereas censored or euphemistic profanity softens this impact. This makes uncensored profanity more likely to enhance perceptions of emotionality in brand communication. Since emotionality is a key dimension of brand

personality, we hypothesize that brands employing uncensored profanity will be perceived as more emotionally evocative, reflecting the intrinsic communicative strength of profanity.

Thus,

> **H1:** Uncensored profane language in social media ads will result in higher perceived brand emotionality compared to censored or euphemistic profanity styles.

2.2. Perceptions of Profanity

Swearing has been associated with specific personality traits, that are often measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI). BFI is considered one of the main methods to measure people's personality and encapsulates 5 factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (versus emotional stability). Swearing is positively correlated with extraversion and neuroticism, particularly among males (Fast and Funder, 2008). In contrast, swearing is negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Jay & Jay, 2015). While some studies found strong negative correlations between swearing and conscientiousness (Mehl et al., 2006), others observed only minor correlations (Fast and Funder, 2008). These findings highlight the complexity of personality predictors for swearing behaviors.

As mentioned in the last section, swear words often operate as degree adverbs, intensifying the meaning of the word they modify. These words convey not only the speaker's strong emotions but also amplify the perceived intensity of the subject, (Lafreniere et al., 2022). Moreover, negative degree adverbs such as swear words can intensify meanings more than neutral or positive adverbs due to their association with breaking taboos (Foolen, 2015; Allan & Burridge, 2006). Despite the harmless intent with which cursing is generally used, speakers who use profanity tend to receive lower impression ratings across dimensions such as intelligence, trustworthiness, and overall likeability (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2018). These biases persist even when individuals do not consciously find the profanity offensive, suggesting an underlying subconscious effect (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2018). Particularly, sexual and religious terms rank as some of the most severe on profanity's offensiveness, which stems from their high cultural taboo, (Baudhuin, 1973). The perceived offensiveness of profanity also varies by context and individual traits. For instance, harsher language often leads to lower impressions

because it is unexpected and unpleasant (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2018). In fact, studies indicate that profanity's emotional impact also depends on its usage, with infrequent swearing amplifying its effect (Lafreniere et al., 2022).

The frequency of swearing varies based on demographic factors such as age, gender, and cultural background (Dewaele, 2015). Accordingly, it is reasonable that generational differences also influence perceptions, with younger individuals showing more tolerant attitudes toward swear words compared to older generations. Over time, certain words such as "fuck" have decreased in perceived severity, while others like "nigger" and "paki" have grown more offensive (Hagen, 2013). Consistently with Hagen, (2013), words such as "bitch" and "fuck," have lost their shock value over time but continue to influence impressions of individuals (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2018).

Profanity is often associated with authenticity and reduced deception. Feldman et al. (2017) and Hair & Ozcan (2018) found that frequent users of profanity were less likely to lie, reinforcing the perception of honesty. This aligns with the view that swearing allows individuals to express genuine feelings rather than being inherently disruptive. On the other hand, individuals who curse are deemed as norm breakers and, as a result, may be considered untrustworthy, (Jay, 2009). So, as a marker of honesty, swearing fosters perceptions of integrity and authenticity while challenging traditional definitions of politeness.

From the literature, we found that uncensored profanity is more direct and emotionally raw, often perceived as a genuine expression of honesty and authenticity. The willingness to take the risk of swearing can convey the seriousness of one's feelings and opinions, enhancing their perceived sincerity.

Thus,

> **H2.1:** Ads featuring uncensored profanity will result in higher perceived brand authenticity compared to ads with censored or euphemistic profanity.

Although profanity can enhance authenticity, swearing may also be perceived as norm-breaking and untrustworthy due to its association with violating social expectations, especially in formal settings, as it is the case of a professional relation between brand and consumer. Euphemistic profanity, by softening the taboo, balances honesty with social acceptability, potentially fostering greater trust in the brand.

Therefore,

> **H2.2:** Ads featuring euphemistic profanity will result in higher perceived trustworthiness compared to ads featuring uncensored profanity.

2.3. Profanity in different languages and cultures

The emotional strength of swear words is most pronounced in a person's first language, diminishing progressively in non-native languages, especially when these languages are acquired in classroom environments (Dewaele, 2004). Similarly, reactions from the autonomic nervous system to taboo words are more pronounced in native languages, highlighting the stronger emotional impact profanity carries in a person's first language (Harris et al., 2003).

Cultural norms also play a key role in determining the appropriateness of profanity. For example, Indian individuals exhibit a higher threshold for offensiveness in abusive scenarios compared to non-Indian people (Kapoor, 2014). With that in mind, linguistic proficiency and cultural differences may affect how consumers perceive brands that incorporate profanity in their ads in very distinctive ways.

Since swear words have stronger emotional resonance and elicit more pronounced autonomic responses in a person's native language compared to a non-native language we hypothesize as follows:

> **H3.1:** Ads featuring profanity in a participant's native language will result in stronger perceptions of emotionality and hedonic qualities compared to profanity in a non-native language.

The emotional strength of profanity diminishes in non-native languages, particularly when these languages are acquired in formal settings, reducing their perceived offensiveness and, consecutively, aggressiveness.

Thus,

H3.2: Profanity in ads presented in a second language will lead to lower perceived aggressiveness compared to the same ads in a native language.

2.4. Profanity in Marketing and Consumer Consequences

Research suggests that incorporating swear words in product reviews or advertisements can influence consumer attitudes. For instance, reviews containing profanity are perceived as more helpful and relatable, potentially increasing favorable attitudes toward the product (Lafreniere et al., 2022). Indeed, the use of profanity, particularly through shock appeals in advertising, enhances attention, memory retention, and behavioral responses (Dahl et al., 2003). Shock advertisements achieve such effect through the violation social norms, which heightens audience attention (Dahl et al., 2003). Despite the risks associated with norm violations, these strategies can be effective in cluttered media environments, ensuring that the message is remembered.

Swear words continue to hold their significance in the digital realms. Popular curse words, such as "fuck," dominate usage, comprising 34.73% of all curse word occurrences on X, former Twitter, (Wang et al., 2014). Profanity use also aligns with X user's diurnal activities, starting at low rates in the morning and reaching a peak late at night, prior to sleep time, (Wang et al., 2014). In marketing contexts, specifically in consumer's reviews, uncensored swear words have a greater influence on favorable attitudes toward products and perceptions of product features than their censored or euphemistic counterparts (Lafreiniere et al., 2022). Additionally, research by Lafreiniere et al., (2022) indicated a tendency for minimal differences between censored and euphemistic word. Ultimately, while attribute strength was significantly mediated by swear word conditions, perceptions of reviewer feeling strength was not consistently influenced by swearing (Lafreiniere et al., 2022). This author proposes that any word approaching the boundaries of taboo can effectively convey the speaker's intense emotions, serving as compelling justification for their results.

Ultimately, swearing plays a dual role in shaping perceptions of honesty. On one hand, it can signal shared group membership and foster psychological closeness (Daly et al., 2004), positively influencing purchase decisions (Berger & Heath, 2008). On the other hand, its impact varies depending on context; while profanity in positive reviews enhances perceived credibility,

its presence in negative reviews may diminish perceptions of objectivity (Hair & Ozcan, 2018). This complexity highlights the nuanced nature of profanity's influence on consumer attitudes and decision-making.

Research shows that profanity in advertisements fosters relatability by signaling shared group membership and psychological closeness with the audience. Thus, higher levels of swear words, that are more easily associated with the original taboo, should covey more reliability.

Therefore,

> **H4.1:** Ads featuring higher levels of profanity (uncensored and censored swear words) will lead to higher perceived brand relatability compared to ads with lower levels of profanity (euphemistic swear words).

Moreover, uncensored profanity has a stronger influence on favorable attitudes and product feature perceptions than censored or euphemistic profanity (Lafreiniere et al., 2022). The uncensored form's norm-breaking nature likely enhances consumer engagement through shock appeal.

Thus,

> **H4.2:** Uncensored profanity in ads will result in more favorable attitudes toward the product (purchase intentions and anticipated satisfaction) compared to censored or euphemistic profanity, with minimal differences between censored and euphemistic styles.

2.5. Brand personality

Brand personality (BP) refers to the set of human traits associated with brands, making them relatable and distinguishable (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). Inspired by human personality dimensions, BP often draws parallels to the Big Five model of human personality, which includes Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability (versus Neuroticism), and Openness (John & Srivastava, 1999). This approach provides a structured framework to study and apply BP in marketing contexts. Aaker's ground-breaking work (1997) borrowed from the Big Five model and remains foundational in BP research. It proposed a 44-item Brand Personality Scale with five dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence,

Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Only three of these dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence) map closely to human personality traits.

Despite its influence, Aaker's scale has faced significant criticism. For example, it lacks cross-cultural applicability, does not generalize well to situations where consumer differentiation is crucial, and has incorporates socio-demographic characteristics which can potentially undermining construct validity (Aaker et al., 2001; Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Geuens et al., 2009). To address these issues, alternative measures have been developed. Geuens et al. (2009) introduced a scale that focuses exclusively on personality traits, excluding functional, demographic, and attitudinal attributes.

The presence of BP dimensions on consumer-brand interaction directly impacts consumer attitudes and behaviors. Sincerity and Competence have the strongest influence on brand attitudes and commitment, while Excitement and Ruggedness have weaker effects (Eisend & Stokburger, 2013). Additionally, metaphors in advertising can enhance perceptions of Sophistication and Excitement but may diminish perceptions of Sincerity and Competence (Ang & Lim, 2006). Competence, in particular, requires sustained engagement, as it is difficult to establish through a single ad.

Humor in brand responses is another avenue where BP influences consumer perceptions. Sincere brands benefit from affiliative humor (e.g., laughing with the complainer), while exciting brands gain from aggressive humor (e.g., laughing at the complainer) (Béal & Grégoire, 2021). These nuanced strategies highlight how BP can interact with emotional cues to shape consumer attitudes.

It is, however, essential that the content spread on platforms like Facebook, and accordingly Instagram, aligns with brand personality traits. This alignment, and a strong digital personality, is what drives greater consumer engagement, including likes, shares, and comments (Chu et al., 2020; Torres & Augusto, 2018; Lee et al., 2008). For instance, first-person narratives paired with warm imagery evoke social belonging, while third-person narratives and competent imagery promote self-enhancement (Chang et al., 2019).

Uncensored profanity, as a form of disruptive communication, can be likened to aggressive humour due to its unexpected and shocking nature. Aggressive humor often elicits positive reactions by creating excitement around brands. Aaker's Excitement dimension aligns with traits of extraversion, which in turn correspond to Geuens's Responsibility brand personality

trait (2009). Consequently, it is logical that the Activity dimension is more strongly influenced by uncensored profanity compared to censored or euphemistic profanity.

Therefore,

> **H5.1:** Ads featuring uncensored profanity will enhance perceptions of brand Excitement (Activity), compared to censored and euphemistic styles.

Euphemistic profanity softens the impact of norm-breaking language, aligning it more closely with the Sincerity dimension, which emphasizes trustworthiness and warmth. Geuens's Responsibility construct (2009) also reflects elements of conscientiousness, much like Sincerity in Aaker's framework (1997), suggesting an overlap between these two constructs.

Therefore,

> **H5.2:** Ads featuring euphemistic profanity will result in higher perceptions of brand Responsibility compared to ads with uncensored or censored profanity.

Lastly, given that euphemistic swear words, being metaphors, increase perceptions of sophistication, we postulate:

> **H5.3:** The euphemistic style of profanity in ads will have a stronger effect on Sophistication compared to censored and uncensored.

2.6. Hedonic Perceptions

Consumer behavior is frequently driven by two core dimensions: hedonic and utilitarian. The hedonic dimension arises from sensory experiences associated with product usage, providing affective gratification and pleasure. In contrast, the utilitarian dimension stems from the functional benefits and practical purposes that a product fulfils (Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Voss et al., 2003). The first often contributes to a brand's ability to charge a price premium, as consumers tend to place higher value on hedonic over utilitarian aspects, (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

Symbolic products, often more associated with hedonic attributes, are perceived as sophisticated and exciting but lack associations with sincerity and competence compared to utilitarian products, (Ang & Lim, 2006). Interestingly, metaphors used in branding can shift

these perceptions. Metaphors enhance sophistication and excitement, particularly for utilitarian products, by adding hedonic value. For symbolic products, however, metaphors may diminish perceptions of sincerity and competence, (Ang & Lim, 2006).

In digital environments, the use of a human voice over a corporate tone enhances hedonic value and positively impacts purchase intentions (Barcelos et al., 2017). Notably, this effect is amplified when consumers interact with brand pages with hedonic goals rather than utilitarian ones, (Barcelos et al., 2017).

Cursing is often perceived as a spontaneous, emotionally driven act rather than a calculated, rational decision, making it resonate as an inherently human behavior (Barcelos et al., 2017). When leveraged by brands, this emotional appeal can help personify the brand, enabling consumers to perceive it as having a more relatable and less corporate tone (Barcelos et al., 2017).

On the contrary of censored and uncensored curse words, the use of euphemistic profanity is expected to have a lesser impact on hedonic perceptions, as it reflects a greater degree of emotional restraint and rational control.

Therefore,

> **H6:** Uncensored swear word will have the strongest impact on hedonic perceptions compared to euphemistic style of swear word.

2.7. Consumer Brand Trust

Consumer trust is a cornerstone of both commercial and social transactions, acting as a mechanism to reduce uncertainty regarding the intentions and capabilities of businesses and brands (Khamitov et al., 2024). It is commonly defined as a consumer's confidence in the reliability and integrity of a brand (DeWulf et al., 2001), which aligns with the broader consensus in the literature, (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; McKnight et al., 2002).

In concordance with the literature Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003) propose a two-dimensional scale of brand trust: Fiability (Reliability), which emphasizes technical competence and value fulfilment, and Intentionality, which reflects emotional security and the belief in a brand's responsibility despite future uncertainties.

The antecedents of trust are varied and multifaceted, encompassing aspects of competence, sincerity, reputation, and risk management. Competence significantly impacts trust by shaping perceptions of an entity's ability to reliably satisfy consumer needs. Similarly, sincerity and ruggedness in brand personality are more likely to enhance trust compared to excitement and sophistication, which primarily evoke brand affect. Competence, however, influences both trust and affect equally, (Sung & Kim, 2010).

Reputation emerges as a critical driver of trust in the marketplace, reinforcing the importance of a track record in delivering promises, (Rifkin et al., 2022). In recent years, both integrity-based and reliability-based antecedents have grown in importance as trust drivers, with integrity often proving more effective (Khamitov et al., 2024). Notably, trust is strongly linked to risk, with higher prices and therefore, higher levels of risk prompting consumers to rely on trust as a guiding factor in purchase decisions, particularly for symbolic brands (Elliott & Yannopoulou, 2007).

Consumer trust generates a range of positive outcomes. It enhances attitudinal outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty, self-concept connection, evaluations, and engagement, while also driving behavioral outcomes like purchase intentions, word-of-mouth behavior, and market performance (11, Roy et al. 2017; Zhang et al., 2014; Kang & Hustvedt 2013; Vlachos et al. 2009; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Despite its importance, trust remains delicate for many businesses. For instance, a 2023 poll revealed that 86% of Americans lack confidence in big businesses, highlighting a crisis of trust in corporate America (Saad, 2023).

Consumers' trust is also influenced by the information they encounter through various sources, including news and social media (Sung & Kim, 2010). Negative perceptions stemming from these interactions can undermine trust, making it imperative for brands to manage their public image carefully.

Sincerity is a critical antecedent of trust, reflecting integrity and emotional alignment with consumers. Euphemistic profanity, being softer and less polarizing, may enhance the perception of sincerity by maintaining the authenticity of the message without crossing into offensive territory. This relationship reinforces the rationale for Hypothesis H5.2.

Furthermore, brand trust, founded on both reliability and integrity, plays a pivotal role in strengthening purchase intentions. Euphemistic profanity, by striking a balance between

authenticity and professionalism, has the potential to enhance trust and subsequently drive positive purchase decisions. This connection supports the basis for Hypothesis H2.2.

2.8. Theoretical conclusions and Hypothesis formulation

The theoretical background most relevant to our study revealed key insights that informed the development of the following hypotheses. Uncensored profanity evokes stronger emotional reactions due to its raw connection to taboos and emotional expression, (Bergen, 2016). This heightened emotionality amplifies perceptions of emotionality in brand communication, which is a key dimension of brand personality. Furthermore, uncensored profanity is often perceived as a genuine expression of honesty and authenticity, enhancing its association with brand sincerity, (Daly et al., 2004). However, euphemistic profanity, by softening the impact of swearing, balances emotional expression with professionalism, thereby enhancing trustworthiness while still maintaining authenticity.

Cultural and linguistic factors also play a significant role in the perception of profanity, (Kapoor, 2014; Dewaele, 2015). Swear words in a person's native language evoke stronger emotional resonance and autonomic responses compared to non-native languages, which tend to reduce the perceived offensiveness and aggressiveness of profanity, (Harris et al., 2003).

In terms of relatability, higher levels of profanity, particularly uncensored and censored, enhance brand relatability by signaling shared group membership and psychological closeness with the audience, (Daly et al., 2004). This effect extends to brand personality dimensions as well. Uncensored profanity aligns with the brand personality trait of excitement due to its norm-breaking and shocking nature, (Dahl et al., 2003), while euphemistic profanity should be more associated with sincerity, responsibility, and sophistication. Euphemistic profanity, as a metaphorical and restrained form of expression, fosters perceptions of professionalism and refinement.

Finally, uncensored profanity creates stronger hedonic perceptions due to its emotional spontaneity, making it a powerful tool for humanizing brand communication, especially in digital environments where a more personal tone enhances brand appeal, (Barcelos et al., 2017).

Based on these theoretical insights, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Uncensored profane language in social media ads will result in higher perceived brand emotionality compared to censored or euphemistic profanity styles.

H2.1: Ads featuring uncensored profanity will result in higher perceived brand authenticity compared to ads with censored or euphemistic profanity.

H2.2: Ads featuring euphemistic profanity will result in higher perceived trustworthiness compared to ads featuring uncensored profanity.

H3.1: Ads featuring profanity in a participant's native language will result in stronger perceptions of emotionality and hedonic qualities compared to profanity in a non-native language.

H3.2: Profanity in ads presented in a second language will lead to lower perceived aggressiveness compared to the same ads in a native language.

H4.1: Ads featuring higher levels of profanity (uncensored and censored swear words) will lead to higher perceived brand relatability compared to ads with lower levels of profanity (euphemistic swear words).

H4.2: Uncensored profanity in ads will result in more favorable attitudes toward the product (purchase intentions and anticipated satisfaction) compared to censored or euphemistic profanity, with minimal differences between censored and euphemistic styles.

H5.1: Ads featuring uncensored profanity will enhance perceptions of brand Excitement (Activity), compared to censored and euphemistic styles.

H5.2: Ads featuring euphemistic profanity will result in higher perceptions of brand Responsibility compared to ads with uncensored or censored profanity.

H5.3: The euphemistic style of profanity in ads will have a stronger effect on Sophistication compared to censored and uncensored profanity.

H6: Uncensored swear words will have the strongest impact on hedonic perceptions compared to euphemistic styles of swear words.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

3.1. Participants

A total of 483 participants took part in this study, recruited on a voluntary basis. Recruitment was primarily conducted through social media channels, such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Participants were invited to complete an online survey developed on Qualtrics.

The sample consisted predominantly of women (52.3%), with men comprising 46.6% of the respondents. A small percentage (1.0%) opted for the "rather not disclose" gender option. Age information was collected via an open-ended response and a slider, resulting in an average age of 30.88 years (SD = 12.97). The majority of participants had attained at least one level of higher education (77.3%), while a smaller group had not completed high school (4.7%).

In terms of native language, most participants identified as native Portuguese speakers (84.9%). Additional notable native languages included German (5.7%), Italian (3.4%), and French (2.0%).

3.2. Materials

Independent Variables:

We manipulated two independent variables in this study: swear word style (euphemistic, censored, and uncensored) and language proficiency (native or second language).

The manipulation of **swear word style** was based on Lafrenière et al.'s (2022) Experiment 3, which tested the diagnosticity of attribute strength and emotional impact by varying profanity usage. To implement this manipulation, participants were presented with an Instagram post created for a fictional brand, TechBrand (TB). Participants were instructed to imagine encountering this post during their usual Instagram browsing, as if it had appeared on the brand's official media page.

The post was deliberately designed to be minimalistic, featuring a generic smartphone on a plain grey background, the TechBrand logo in the upper-left corner, the phrase "coming soon" in medium-sized text, and a fictitious website in smaller font. No additional elements, such as

a post description, likes count, or hashtags, were included to maintain a neutral and controlled design that would isolate the effect of swear word style.

Each post prominently displayed a bold catchphrase that varied across conditions. The uncensored condition featured the phrase “Fuck, what a phone!” The censored condition displayed “F*ck, what a phone!” The euphemistic condition used “Frick, what a phone!” We deliberately chose not to include a control condition without profanity (e.g., “What a phone!”) or one with a neutral interjection (e.g., “Wow, what a phone!”). A profanity-free version was considered overly bland and unenthusiastic, which could reduce its emotional impact. Meanwhile, including a neutral interjection such as “Wow” could introduce a confounding variable, as it altered the tone and emotional intensity. By using the euphemistic term “Frick,” we were able to isolate the effect of explicit profanity without changing the tone or enthusiasm level. Additionally, due to the limited number of participants, incorporating a control group was not feasible for this study. Instead, the focus was placed on comparing the three profanity styles directly. This approach can be justified as it provides a rigorous test of the effect of profanity, as profanity is consistently present across conditions. By examining differences between profanity styles rather than the presence versus absence of profanity, the study aims to isolate and highlight the nuanced impacts of different profanity styles on brand perception.

To manipulate **language proficiency**, participants were divided into two conditions based on their linguistic background. In one condition, the stimuli were presented in English, as described above, and this was shown exclusively to participants who identified as non-native English speakers. In the other condition, the stimuli were presented in Portuguese to participants who were native Portuguese speakers. For the Portuguese version, the uncensored condition featured the phrase “Foda-se, que telemóvel!” The censored condition displayed “F*da-se, que telemóvel!” Finally, the euphemistic condition used “Fogo, que telemóvel!”

These manipulations allowed for a systematic examination of the effects of both swear word style and language proficiency on participants’ perceptions of the brand. All six stimuli are presented in Appendix 1 for consultation.

Dependent Variables:

To measure participants' perceptions of the **product's hedonic and utilitarian attributes**, we adapted the HED/UT scale developed by Voss et al. (2003). This scale originally consisted of ten items (five for each dimension) and has been validated through extensive psychometric testing across multiple geographic locations and stimuli. The original scale pairs adjectives to rate on a 7-point scale and is typically presented in a matrix format, with the hedonic dimension on the X-axis and the utilitarian dimension on the Y-axis, (Appendix 2). While the original scale demonstrated reliability and validity, some adjective pairs were not user-friendly, and adjustments were made to improve respondent comprehension, (Appendix 3).

For the utilitarian dimension, participants rated items such as "Effective," "Helpful," "Functional," "Necessary," and "Practical." The lowest point on the scale was adjusted from the original descriptors (e.g., "ineffective") to less unclear phrases, such as "Not effective at all." Similarly, for the hedonic dimension, participants rated items such as "Fun," "Exciting," "Delightful," "Thrilling," and "Enjoyable," This revised scale maintained the 7-point format, where 1 represented "Not at all" and 7 represented "Extremely." [Cronbach Alpha was 0.914 for the hedonic condition and 0.929 for the utilitarian condition]

To measure **Brand personality** (BP), we employed the scale developed by Geuens et al. (2009), which links brand personality traits to the Big Five human personality dimensions. Unlike earlier scales, such as Aaker's (1997), the Geuens scale demonstrated reliability for between-brand and between-category comparisons, as well as cross-cultural validity in multiple countries. This scale is directly applicable to our study, as it allows for the measurement of brand traits that correspond to human traits, enabling comparisons between perceptions of profanity in people and brands.

The scale consists of five dimensions: Responsibility (through capturing traits like down-to-earth, stable, and responsible), Activity (active, dynamic, and innovative), Aggressiveness (aggressive and bold), Simplicity (ordinary and simple), and Emotionality (romantic and sentimental). Each dimension was rated on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Not characteristic of the brand at all" and 7 indicated "Very characteristic of the brand." The scale remained unaltered from its original form, ensuring consistency with the validated instrument.

Although some authors, such as Oklevik et al. (2019), have critiqued both Aaker's (1997) and Geuens' scales (2009) for not capturing brand personality through free associations, their argument does not undermine the utility of these scales for quantitative comparisons. Free

associations often capture contextual characteristics rather than personality traits, making them less applicable in our quantitative study. Our focus is not on comparing contextual factors but rather on assessing personality perceptions. Additionally, our aim is to use the scale for comparative analysis, rather than to define the Tech Brand (TB) specifically. This approach further validates the scale's suitability for our purposes, emphasizing its role in structured and consistent measurement. [Cronbach Alpha was 0.907 for the responsibility condition, 0.899 for the activity condition, 0.682 for the aggressiveness condition (which we still considered for the closeness to 0.7), 0.702 for the simplicity condition, 0.862 for the emotionality condition]

Brand trust was assessed using an adapted version of the scale developed by Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003). This scale conceptualizes brand trust through two dimensions: Reliability (Fiability) and Intentionality. Reliability refers to the technical aspect of trust, reflecting the perception that the brand fulfils its promises and meets consumer needs. Intentionality, on the other hand, reflects emotional security and confidence that the brand will act responsibly and prioritize the consumer's interests even in adverse circumstances.

The scale consists of eight items, four for each dimension, rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 7 ("Strongly agree"). Examples of reliability items include: "TechBrand fulfills its promises" and "TechBrand is dependable." Intentionality items included: "TechBrand would make an effort to satisfy me" and "TechBrand would be honest and sincere." We adapted some statements to better fit the context of TB and adjusted the original 5-point scale to a 7-point format for consistency with other measures in the study. These changes can be reviewed in detail in Appendix 4. [Cronbach Alpha was 0.943 for the brand trust condition]

In addition to hedonic and utilitarian perceptions, brand personality, and brand trust, several straightforward dependent variables were assessed directly:

- Hedonic-Utilitarian Continuum: Following a brief explanation of the meanings of utilitarian and hedonic, participants rated whether the product was more hedonic or utilitarian on a single-item scale from 1 ("Definitely utilitarian") to 7 ("Definitely hedonic").

- Brand Perception: Participants were asked to rank on how much they though several items were characteristic of TB (“Trust Perception”, “Authenticity Perception”, “Sophistication Perception”, “Ethicality perception”, “Intelligence Perception”, “Relatability Perception”,

“Evilness Perception”, “Delivers on promises”, and “Feeling of closeness”) using a Likert matrix ranging from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Definitely").

- Purchase Intention: Participants rated how likely they would be to purchase the smartphone if it matched their needs and budget, on a scale from 1 ("Not at all likely") to 7 ("Extremely likely").

- Expected Satisfaction: Participants indicated how satisfied they anticipated being with the brand’s smartphone, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("Not at all satisfied") to 7 ("Extremely satisfied").

For these variables, no standardized scale was required due to the direct and straightforward nature of the questions. We conducted this extensive collection of different dependent variables because this topic remains underexplored, with limited prior research available. This approach serves as a form of exploratory research, allowing us to capture a broader range of dimensions beyond those referenced in existing studies. Furthermore, as most prior research on profanity in marketing has focused on consumer reviews rather than brand advertisements, we anticipated that the use of profanity in ads might influence additional dimensions not previously examined.

Control Variables:

To ensure the quality of the sample, we included an attention check. Participants were instructed to select the number 6 on a scale ranging from 1 to 7 to confirm their attentiveness.

While aggressiveness was not a direct manipulation check, but a part of the brand personality scales, the results on aggressiveness provide insight into whether the manipulation of swear word style aligns with findings from previous research on how profanity impacts perceptions of boldness, assertiveness, or even aggression. This approach allows us to assess whether the manipulation influenced participants' perceptions of the brand in ways consistent with the intended stimulus design.

3.3 Procedure

Before beginning the survey, participants were presented with an introduction page that provided context about the research topic and asked to provide their informed consent. This introduction also included a disclaimer regarding the use of informal language in the questionnaire.

Participants were then introduced to the screening block. Respondents who only spoke native Portuguese were assigned to the native condition and subsequently randomized into one of the three swear word style conditions (uncensored, euphemistic, or censored). Similarly, respondents who spoke English as a second language were assigned to the second-language condition of the language proficiency variable and then randomly distributed across the three swear word style conditions. For participants who spoke both native Portuguese and English as a second language, randomization was applied across all six experimental conditions. Respondents who were not native Portuguese speakers and either did not speak English or were native English speakers, were excluded from the stimuli assignment and exited the survey. We chose this approach of measuring results in Portuguese as the native language and in English as the non-native language because we anticipated an insufficient sample size of native English-speaking participants. Additionally, focusing solely on non-native English speakers could yield limited significant results, as swearing in non-native languages typically elicits weaker emotional responses compared to native languages. This dual-language approach ensures a more robust and meaningful evaluation of the data.

Once assigned to their conditions, participants were asked to imagine they were scrolling through social media and came across an Instagram post from a fictional technology brand, TechBrand (TB), introducing their new smartphone. They were shown their assigned stimulus and instructed to view the image attentively for a few seconds.

Following this, participants completed the Likert scale questions on straightforward constructs, and then proceeded to validated scales for hedonic and utilitarian perceptions, brand trust, and brand personality, presented in matrix format. An attention check question was included near the end of this block, placed between the brand trust and brand personality matrices, to ensure response quality.

Demographic information was collected at the conclusion of the survey. This included gender, age, highest level of education (to assess literacy levels, given the study's focus on language),

and native language (critical for evaluating language proficiency in the context of the study). A brief acknowledgement was presented at the end. The full survey is available in Appendix 5 for consultation.

3.4 Design

The experiment employed a 2 language proficiency (native, second language) x 3 profanity style (euphemistic, censored, uncensored), between subjects design.

4.Result analysis

Demographics:

The average age of participants was 30.88 years (*SD = 12.97*), reflecting a diverse age range. Regarding gender, 52.3% of respondents identified as female, 46.6% identified as male, and 1.0% preferred not to disclose their gender identity.

In terms of language background, the majority of participants (84.9%) reported Portuguese as their native language. A smaller percentage of participants identified other native languages, including German (5.7%), Italian (3.4%), French (2.0%), and various other languages (3.9%).

Educational attainment was predominantly high among the participants. Most respondents (55.5%) had completed a Bachelor's degree, while 15.1% reported holding a Master's degree, and 6.0% had completed postgraduate education. A notable portion (18.0%) had completed high school, 4.4% reported completing middle school, and only a small fraction had less than middle school education (0.3%) or held a professional degree (0.3%).

Manipulation check:

As expected, significant differences were observed between the experimental groups in aggressiveness, confirming the effectiveness of the independent variable manipulation. Participants in the censored condition ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.43$) and the uncensored condition ($M = 4.93, SD = 1.40$) reported higher agreement on the measure compared to those in the euphemistic condition ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.50$). The results of the ANOVA test indicate that the differences between these groups are statistically significant, ($F (2, 310) = 16.42, p < .001$).

These findings support the conclusion that the experimental manipulation of the independent variable (swear word style) was effective.

Dependent variables:

An ANOVA 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored*) × 2 (*Native, Second Language*) was conducted to analyze the dependent variable "**Hedonic-Utilitarian Continuum**" The results revealed a significant main effect of Swear Word Style ($F (2, 310) = 3.55, p = .030$), indicating that participants' perceptions of the product differed depending on the style of swear word used. Specifically, participants in the uncensored condition reported the highest mean score, being closer to the hedonic end of the spectrum ($M = 4.29, SD = 1.532$), followed by the censored condition ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.470$), and the euphemistic condition ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.399$).

There was no significant main effect of Language ($F (1, 310) = 0.27, p = .605$), indicating that native Portuguese speakers ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.486$) and non-native English speakers ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.476$) did not differ significantly in their perceptions. Additionally, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant ($F (2, 310) = 0.23, p = .793$), suggesting that the observed differences in perceptions across Swear Word Style conditions did not vary significantly based on participants' language group.

The independent t-test comparing hedonic versus utilitarian perception between the uncensored and censored conditions showed a statistically significant difference, ($t (205.99) = 2.083, p = 0.038$). Similarly, the comparison between uncensored and euphemistic conditions also showed a significant difference, ($t (204.63) = 2.452, p = 0.015$). However, the comparison between censored and euphemistic conditions did not yield significant results, ($t (210.27) = 0.326, p = 0.745$).

These results allow us to fail to reject H6, confirming that uncensored swear words have a stronger impact on hedonic perceptions compared to euphemistic styles.

Similarly to the previous dependent variable an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the dependent variable "**Authenticity Perception**" The analysis revealed a significant main effect of Swear Word Style ($F (2, 310) = 3.077, p = .048$), showing that

perceptions of authenticity varied across the experimental conditions. Participants in the censored condition reported the highest mean score (*M = 4.59, SD = 1.584*), followed by the uncensored condition (*M = 4.58, SD = 1.746*), and the euphemistic condition (*M = 4.12, SD = 1.484*).

The main effect of Language was not significant (*F (1, 310) = 0.010, p = .922*), indicating no meaningful difference between native Portuguese speakers (*M = 4.44, SD = 1.667*) and non-native English speakers (*M = 4.42, SD = 1.574*) in their ratings of authenticity. Similarly, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant (*F (2, 310) = 0.703, p = .496*), suggesting that the influence of Swear Word Style on perceptions of authenticity did not differ depending on participants' language group.

The independent t-test comparing authenticity between uncensored and censored conditions showed no significant difference (*t [203.78] = -0.051, p = 0.959*). However, a significant difference was observed between uncensored and euphemistic conditions (*t [200.07] = 2.058, p = 0.041*), as well as between censored and euphemistic conditions (*t [209.83] = 2.248, p = 0.026*).

These results fail to reject H2.1, indicating that ads featuring euphemistic profanity resulted in lower perceived authenticity compared to uncensored profanity.

To examine the dependent variable "**Sophistication Perception**" we completed an ANOVA 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored*) × 2 (*Native, Second Language*). The results showed a significant main effect of Swear Word Style (*F (2, 310) = 6.405, p = .002*), indicating that participants' perceptions of sophistication varied depending on the style of the swear word. Participants in the euphemistic condition gave the highest ratings (*M = 4.42, SD = 1.511*), followed by the uncensored condition (*M = 3.79, SD = 1.713)* and the censored condition (*M = 3.67, SD = 1.672*).

A significant main effect of Language was also observed (*F (1, 310) = 4.297, p = .039*), with non-native English speakers reporting higher ratings of sophistication (*M = 4.15, SD = 1.681*) than native Portuguese speakers (*M = 3.76, SD = 1.622*). However, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant (*F (2, 310) = 0.373, p = .689*), suggesting

that language context influences perceptions of sophistication, with non-native speakers perceiving higher levels compared to native speakers.

The independent t-test comparing sophistication between uncensored and censored conditions showed no significant difference (*t [207] = 0.498, p = 0.619*). However, there was a significant difference between uncensored and euphemistic conditions (*t [202.64] = -2.841, p = 0.005*). Similarly, a significant difference was observed between censored and euphemistic conditions (*t [208.48] = -3.437, p < 0.001*).

These results support H5.3, as the euphemistic style of profanity in ads had a stronger effect on sophistication compared to censored and uncensored styles.

An ANOVA 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored*) × 2 (*Native, Second Language*) was conducted to examine the dependent variable "**Activity**", from the Brand personality scale. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of Swear Word Style (*F (2, 310) = 7.701, p < .001*), indicating that perceptions of activity varied across the experimental conditions. Participants in the uncensored condition tended to report the highest levels of activity (*M = 5.27, SD = 1.346*), followed by the censored condition (*M = 5.05, SD = 1.205),* and the euphemistic condition (*M = 4.57, SD = 1.383*).

There was no significant main effect of Language (*F (1, 310) = 0.120, p = .730*), suggesting that native Portuguese speakers (*M = 4.99, SD = 1.391*) and non-native English speakers (*M = 4.93, SD = 1.298)* did not differ significantly in their ratings. Additionally, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant (*F (2, 310) = 0.035, p = .966*), indicating that the observed differences in activity across Swear Word Style conditions were consistent across language groups.

Comparing activity between uncensored and censored conditions showed no significant difference (*t [207] = 1.218, p = 0.225*). Still, a significant difference was observed between uncensored and euphemistic conditions (*t [207.98] = 3.709, p < 0.001*). Similarly, a significant difference was found between censored and euphemistic conditions (*t [207.61] = 2.720, p = 0.007*).

As expected, these results support H5.1, as the uncensored style of profanity in ads led to higher perceptions of brand excitement (activity) compared to euphemistic and censored styles.

The influence of Swear Word Style and Language on the dependent variable "**Aggressiveness**", from the brand personality scale, was evaluated using a 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored)* × 2 (*Native, Second Language*) ANOVA. The results indicated a significant main effect of Swear Word Style ($F\ (2, 310) = 16.423, p < .001$), suggesting that perceptions of aggressiveness differed based on the style of the swear word. Participants in the uncensored condition reported the highest levels of aggressiveness ($M = 4.93, SD = 1.404$), followed by the censored condition ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.431$), and the euphemistic condition ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.499$).

The main effect of Language was not statistically significant ($F\ (1, 310) = 2.951, p = .087$), indicating no substantial difference in perceptions of aggressiveness between native Portuguese speakers ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.539$) and non-native English speakers ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.484$). Additionally, there was no significant interaction between Swear Word Style and Language ($F\ (2, 310) = 0.685, p = .505$), implying that the observed patterns of aggressiveness across Swear Word Style conditions were consistent across language groups.

The independent t-test comparing perceived aggressiveness between uncensored and censored conditions showed no significant difference ($t\ [207] = 0.110, p = 0.913$). However, a significant difference was observed between uncensored and euphemistic conditions ($t\ [207.85] = 4.954, p < 0.001$). Similarly, a significant difference was found between censored and euphemistic conditions ($t\ [210.72] = 4.837, p < 0.001$).

These differences between groups further proves success of the manipulation of swear word style, and consecutively, aggressiveness as dependable manipulation measure.

A factorial ANOVA 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored*) × 2 (*Native, Second Language*) was performed to analyze the dependent variable "**Simplicity**", another of the brand personality constructs. The results revealed a significant main effect of Swear Word Style ($F\ (2, 310) = 10.741, p < .001$), indicating that perceptions of simplicity were influenced by the style of the swear word. Participants in the euphemistic condition demonstrated a tendency to perceive the product as the simplest ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.265$), followed by the uncensored condition ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.449$) and the censored condition ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.315$).

The main effect of Language was not significant (*F (1, 310) = 1.976, p = .161*), suggesting that native Portuguese speakers (*M = 3.55, SD = 1.481*) and non-native English speakers (*M = 3.77, SD = 1.285*) did not differ significantly in their perceptions of simplicity. Additionally, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant (*F (2, 310) = 0.131, p = .877*), indicating that the influence of Swear Word Style on simplicity ratings was consistent across language groups.

The independent t-test comparing simplicity between uncensored and censored conditions showed no significant difference (*t [207] = 0.462, p = 0.645*). However, a significant difference was observed between uncensored and euphemistic conditions (*t [201.98] = -3.688, p < 0.001*). Similarly, a significant difference was found between censored and euphemistic conditions (*t [210.51] = -4.420, p < 0.001*).

These results suggest that simplicity, as part of the brand personality scale, was perceived as higher for euphemistic profanity compared to uncensored and censored styles, revealing an interesting finding in this exploratory analysis.

The dependent variable "**Delivers on promises**" was analyzed using a factorial ANOVA 3 (*Euphemistic, Censored, Uncensored*) × 2 (*Native, Second Language*). The results showed no significant main effect of Swear Word Style (*F (2, 310) = 0.309, p = .735*), indicating that perceptions of the brand's ability to deliver on its promises did not differ significantly across the euphemistic, censored, and uncensored conditions. The mean ratings were comparable across conditions, with the censored condition having a mean of 4.37 (*SD = 1.297*), the euphemistic condition at 4.36 (*SD = 1.362*), and the uncensored condition at 4.23 (*SD = 1.477*).

A significant main effect of Language was observed (*F (1, 310) = 4.762, p = .030*), suggesting that non-native English speakers (*M = 4.48, SD = 1.345*) rated the brand's ability to deliver on its promises higher than native Portuguese speakers (*M = 4.14, SD = 1.393*). However, the interaction between Swear Word Style and Language was not significant (*F (2, 310) = 0.248, p = .781*), indicating that the effect of Swear Word Style on this dependent variable was consistent across language groups.

Even though, these results do not allow to support H2.2 featuring trustworthiness and swear word style interaction they suggest that language context (non-native vs. native) influences perceptions related to trustworthiness of the product, aligning with the idea that profanity in a non-native language may enhance perceived trustworthiness compared to native.

For the dependent variables examined, several analyses revealed **non-significant effects** of swear word style language proficiency, and their interaction. For swear word style, no significant effects were observed for the following dependent variables: Delivery on promises, $F(2, 310) = 0.309$, $p = .735$; Trust perception, $F(2, 310) = 1.432$, $p = .240$; Relatability perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.314$, $p = .731$; Feelings of closeness, $F(2, 310) = 0.719$, $p = .488$; Intelligence perception, $F(2, 310) = 1.994$, $p = .138$; Ethicality perception, $F(2, 310) = 1.934$, $p = .146$; Evilness perception, $F(2, 310) = 2.497$, $p = .084$; Purchase intentions, $F(2, 310) = 0.747$, $p = .475$; Satisfaction, $F(2, 310) = 0.270$, $p = .764$; Hedonic scale, $F(2, 310) = 0.378$, $p = .686$; Utilitarian scale, $F(2, 310) = 1.602$, $p = .203$; Brand Trust Scale, $F(2, 310) = 0.110$, $p = .896$; Responsibility of Brand Personality Scale, $F(2, 310) = 1.873$, $p = .155$; and Emotionality of Brand Personality Scale, $F(2, 310) = 1.511$, $p = .222$.

For language proficiency, no significant effects were found for the following dependent variables: Hedonic versus utilitarian perception, $F(1, 310) = 0.269$, $p = .605$; Trust perception, $F(1, 310) = 1.113$, $p = .292$; Relatability perception, $F(1, 310) = 2.605$, $p = .108$; Authenticity perception, $F(1, 310) = 0.010$, $p = .922$; Feelings of closeness, $F(1, 310) = 1.569$, $p = .211$; Intelligence perception, $F(1, 310) = 1.223$, $p = .270$; Ethicality perception, $F(1, 310) = 0.161$, $p = .688$; Evilness perception, $F(1, 310) = 0.012$, $p = .913$; Purchase intentions, $F(1, 310) = 0.958$, $p = .328$; Satisfaction, $F(1, 310) = 1.937$, $p = .165$; Hedonic scale, $F(1, 310) = 0.679$, $p = .410$; Utilitarian scale, $F(1, 310) = 0.548$, $p = .460$; Brand Trust Scale, $F(1, 310) = 0.001$, $p = .974$; Responsibility of Brand Personality Scale, $F(1, 310) = 0.016$, $p = .900$; Activity of Brand Personality Scale, $F(1, 310) = 0.120$, $p = .730$; Agreeableness of Brand Personality Scale, $F(1, 310) = 2.951$, $p = .087$; Simplicity of Brand Personality Scale, $F(1, 310) = 1.976$, $p = .161$; and Emotionality of Brand Personality Scale, $F(1, 310) = 1.353$, $p = .246$.

Finally, no significant interaction effects between swear word style and language proficiency were observed across all dependent variables. Hedonic-Utilitarian Continuum, $F(2, 310) = 0.232$, $p = .793$; Delivery on promises, $F(2, 310) = 0.248$, $p = .781$; Trust perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.891$, $p = .411$; Relatability perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.142$, $p = .867$; Authenticity perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.703$, $p = .496$; Feelings of closeness, $F(2, 310) = 0.478$, $p = .621$; Sophistication perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.373$, $p = .689$; Intelligence perception, $F(2, 310) = 1.098$, $p = .335$; Ethicality perception, $F(2, 310) = 1.578$, $p = .208$; Evilness perception, $F(2, 310) = 0.224$, $p = .800$; Purchase intentions, $F(2, 310) = 0.207$, $p = .813$; Satisfaction, $F(2, 310) = 0.358$, $p = .700$;

Hedonic scale, F(2, 310) = 0.027, p = .973; Utilitarian scale, F(2, 310) = 0.291, p = .748; Brand Trust Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.148, p = .863; Responsibility of Brand Personality Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.491, p = .613; Activity of Brand Personality Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.035, p = .966; Aggressiveness of Brand Personality Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.685, p = .505; Simplicity of Brand Personality Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.131, p = .877; and Emotionality of Brand Personality Scale, F(2, 310) = 0.779, p = .460.

As the effects for these variables were not significant, the reported means and standard deviations are provided in Appendix 6 to aid in understanding the tendencies discussed in the next section of this thesis, the main findings and conclusions.

We would specifically like to highlight how the means of some of these non-significant dependent variables could suggest certain tendencies. For instance, in the case of emotionality, the means and standard deviations across the swear word style conditions are as follows: total euphemistic (M = 2.57, SD = 1.48), total censored (M = 2.78, SD = 1.57), and total uncensored (M = 2.96, SD = 1.66), Appendix 6.2. These values indicate a gradual increase in perceived emotionality as the swear word style becomes less restrained, potentially pointing toward a subtle trend.

5. Main Findings and Conclusions

The ANOVA results did not provide significant evidence to support H1, accordingly, we failed to reject strong emotionality effects caused by swear word style. However, analysis of the means and standard deviations (Appendix 6.2) revealed an apparent tendency for uncensored profanity to elicit the highest emotionality ratings, while euphemistic profanity ranked the lowest. As anticipated, there was also a trend suggesting that higher levels of profanity in a participant's native language led to stronger emotional effects. This observation aligns with the reputable understanding that a first language is deeply tied to emotional proximity and sentiment.

This non-significant effect might be partially explained by the overwhelming volume of content, including profane material, encountered on social media platforms, which can contribute to desensitization to obscene language (Fairman, 2006). While brands do not typically share explicit profanity, the fictional nature of the brand used in the stimuli may have

prompted participants to associate it more with individual content creators who frequently use such language. Furthermore, the unfamiliarity of the brand likely diluted the effects of the brand personality dimensions; respondents might have coded the brand as a new or niche entity, and brand perceptions are often weaker for emerging brands compared to well-established ones (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). We also grounded many of our hypotheses on perceptions of human swearing rather than brands using profanity, as this remains an underdeveloped area of research. Much of the existing literature compares the use of swear words to the absence of profanity, and perhaps the lack of a control condition without profane words was a limitation in our experimental design. However, as explained in the methodology section, we focused on three profanity style conditions for two main reasons: first, our sample size was not sufficient to accommodate a 4x2 experimental design, and second, we believed that excluding profanity entirely would alter the tone of the message too drastically. Our primary interest was in comparing different levels of profanity, given that prior research already demonstrates profanity's effectiveness in capturing attention and enhancing recall for brands, (Dahl et al., 2003).

As expected, the results for H2.1 indicated that euphemistic profanity was associated with lower perceived authenticity compared to uncensored profanity. Additionally, while no significant differences were found between censored and uncensored profanity styles, significant differences emerged between censored and euphemistic styles. One possible explanation for the findings is that a euphemistic profanity style might be perceived as less authentic compared to censored profanity due to differences in attributional processes. Specifically, censorship is often seen as an external factor, outside the brand's control, and therefore not reflective of the brand's intentions. In contrast, the use of a euphemistic style is a deliberate choice by the brand, which may lead consumers to attribute the lack of authenticity directly to the brand's actions or intentions. Regarding H2.2, the results did not allow for a definitive rejection or confirmation of the hypothesis, as neither the brand trust scale nor the direct trustworthiness question revealed significant effects of profanity style. However, responses to the statement "delivers on the promise of offering a very good phone" suggested that language context, specifically non-native versus native language, influenced trustworthiness perceptions. This finding aligns with the notion that profanity in a non-native language might enhance trustworthiness by accentuating the emotional familiarity and proximity associated with such expressions.

Language proficiency did not show a significant effect on emotionality or hedonic perceptions (H3.1). However, as anticipated, there was a slight trend toward higher emotionality ratings when profanity appeared in participants' native language, consistent with the emotional resonance of one's first language. The trend for hedonic perceptions was less pronounced, likely influenced by the unique linguistic environment of the sample. Many participants, particularly the younger Portuguese demographic (mean age of 31), consume substantial amounts of English-language media, including movies, music, and television series, due to limited translation options. This exposure, coupled with social media's accessibility to informal and emotionally charged English content, has fostered an environment where many Portuguese youth acquire English proficiency outside traditional classroom settings, strengthening their emotional connection to English (Dewaele, 2004). Additionally, a significant portion of non-Portuguese participants lived and studied in Lisbon, using English as their primary mode of communication, which may have similarly heightened their emotional attachment to English, reducing supposed differences between native and non-native conditions.

The hypothesis related to language and aggressiveness (H3.2) was rejected, as language effects were not significant. However, swear word style did show significant differences, affirming the success of the manipulation in eliciting variations in aggressiveness perceptions. Interestingly, while no significant results were found for relatability (H4.1), the censored condition tended to be perceived as the least relatable. This could stem from the artificiality of censorship, as consumers typically do not censor themselves when swearing; censorship is often imposed externally. Similarly, H4.2 showed no significant effects on purchase intentions or anticipated satisfaction.

The results for H5.1 supported the hypothesis, as uncensored profanity significantly enhanced perceptions of brand excitement (activity) compared to censored and euphemistic styles. For responsibility (H5.2), no significant results were found, but the censored condition ranked lowest, possibly because the use of an asterisk in the censored profanity drew attention to the perceived misconduct. In contrast, the absence of an asterisk in the uncensored condition normalized the language. This effect evokes parallels with contexts where imposed restrictions can unintentionally amplify focus on the restricted element, as seen in cultural settings where concealment draws attention to the concealed subject.

As anticipated, the results for H5.3 confirmed that euphemistic profanity elicited the strongest perceptions of sophistication. Euphemistic language, with its abstract and indirect nature, aligns

with societal associations of complexity and refinement, reinforcing its perceived sophistication. These results also reaffirm the reliability of the sample, as participants' responses conformed to established societal norms regarding linguistic subtlety and abstraction.

The findings for H6 demonstrated that uncensored profanity had the strongest impact on hedonic perceptions. Interestingly, there was no significant difference between the censored and euphemistic conditions, suggesting that both convey similar levels of playfulness. Uncensored profanity, however, likely introduces an element of boldness and intensity, which enhances emotional engagement and aligns with symbolic product value. Aggressive language, often linked to uncensored profanity, is typically perceived as more intense and impactful than playful expressions, as supported by Lafreniere et al. (2002).

Exploratory results revealed that simplicity, as a brand personality dimension, was rated higher for euphemistic profanity than for uncensored or censored styles. This finding is intriguing given that the items measuring simplicity included sentimental and romantic attributes. Euphemisms, with their softer and more indirect tone, appear more approachable and emotionally nuanced, resonating with these attributes. Additionally, a hierarchical pattern of profanity intensity emerged: euphemistic profanity was the lightest, censored profanity was intermediate, and uncensored profanity was the boldest. On the contrary, on the variables that shown no significance of effects, censored profanity tended to show a stronger effect, reflecting in lower rates then euphemistic and uncensored condition conditions in aspects such as: trustworthiness, relatability, and ethicality, compared to both uncensored and euphemistic styles. This trend might indicate a potential shift that still lacks expressive significance.

The findings of this study emphasize the nuanced role of profanity in brand communication, demonstrating its potential to evoke authenticity, boldness, and more symbolic product attributes while also highlighting its risks, particularly with censored profanity, which might be diverging to have stronger effects on some aspects critical for brand's success. As swearing becomes more normalized in both everyday interactions and online discourse, its strategic use in marketing offers brands an opportunity to connect with audiences on a deeper, more emotional level.

6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study contributes to the limited body of literature on the role of profanity in brand communication, offering nuanced insights into how varying profanity styles influence brand perceptions. By integrating theories of emotional communication, linguistics, and brand personality, it underscores the dual nature of profanity: as both a potential enhancer of authenticity and emotionality and as a source of controversy.

From a managerial perspective, linguistic nuances revealed in previous literature highlight the importance of adopting thoughtful, context-driven strategies when leveraging profanity. For instance, as the theoretical framework suggests, despite being partially constrained by a sample bias, profanity in a native language tends to evoke stronger emotionality. This insight emphasizes the potential for language-specific campaigns to resonate more deeply in certain markets.

Interestingly, for most significant variables (except hedonic versus utilitarian perceptions), there were no notable differences between the uncensored and censored profanity conditions. This finding provides an actionable strategy for brands hesitant to use explicit profanity: opting for censored profanity can achieve similar effects, maintaining relatability while mitigating potential controversy.

The findings also offer guidance for brands aiming to shape consumer perceptions strategically. Brands seeking to position themselves as aggressive, bold, or daring should incorporate profanity into their social media ads, particularly to emphasize traits such as dynamism, innovation, and activity within the brand personality framework. Similarly, brands aiming to rebuild authenticity or originality following controversies or skepticism could also consider profanity, especially in contexts that align with youthful or edgy brand personas.

To reinforce the hedonic aspects of a product or service, uncensored profanity should be prioritized, as it outperforms censored and euphemistic styles in conveying bold emotionality and symbolic value. On the other hand, for associations with simplicity, capturing light, fun, and creative attributes like romantic or sentimental tones, euphemistic profanity is more effective due to its softer and more nuanced nature.

However, for brands aiming to enhance authenticity without invoking boldness or aggressiveness, profanity may not be the most suitable strategy. In these cases, alternative

approaches to messaging should be explored, aligning with a more restrained and polished brand image. Consequently, this study provides a roadmap for brands to navigate the complexities of profanity in marketing tailoring strategies to specific brand goals and audience contexts.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations in this study warrant consideration and suggest directions for future research. First, the sample size may have been too small, and the timeframe for collecting measures too brief. A more extended study could analyze the same participants over time, exploring how consistent use of profanity by TechBrand affects its reputation, brand perceptions, and trust. Tracking these changes longitudinally would provide deeper insights into the lasting effects of profanity on brand development.

One of the primary limitations, particularly regarding language proficiency effects, is the high level of English fluency and exposure among our sample, which served as the "non-native" condition. Repeating the study with a less globalized language—one less likely to be learned outside a formal classroom context—could yield more distinct results regarding the emotional impact of native versus non-native language profanity. Furthermore, we failed to implement a pre-test to evaluate the emotional intensity of the profane words used. This oversight may have affected the effectiveness of the materials in eliciting the intended perceptions of profanity necessary for testing the hypotheses. While the theoretical basis remains sound, the materials may not have triggered or been perceived as profanity in the way required for a robust examination of the hypotheses.

Another limitation of this study is that many of our hypotheses were based on perceptions of human swearing rather than brand use of profanity, as this remains an underdeveloped area of research. Additionally, the absence of a fourth control group without profanity may have constrained our ability to detect significant effects in variables where stronger results were anticipated, such as the Brand Trust Scale and emotionality.

The complex construct of trust resulted in another limitation for us, as it is inherently challenging to measure due to its multifaceted nature. Trust can be influenced by numerous

variables, which may vary across different consumer profiles. Furthermore, brand trust is closely tied to reputation, which does not exist for a fictional brand. The absence of a reputation for TechBrand likely weakened the construct's validity in this context, contributing to the non-significant effects observed.

Additionally, there is no universally accepted method for measuring brand personality, which remains a significant challenge. While scales such as those by Geuens et al. (2009) and Aaker et al. (1997) are widely used, they have faced considerable criticism regarding their applicability and validity. Despite this, there has been limited progress in developing more robust alternatives, leaving room for improvement in future studies.

The use of a fictional brand may also have influenced participants' responses, as they may have associated the brand with individual content creators rather than established companies. This likely diluted the impact of brand personality dimensions. Future studies could address this limitation by evaluating the effects of profanity on well-known brands with established reputations and strong brand personalities. Such research could provide more definitive insights into how profanity shapes perceptions of brands that already hold meaningful connections with consumers. Once more, the lack of a neutral control condition may have hindered the ability to detect meaningful differences in personality traits across profanity styles, as all conditions involved profanity, potentially minimizing distinctions.

The study's focus on immediate reactions to profanity is another limitation. Long-term effects on brand perception, loyalty, and consumer behavior were not measured. Future research could explore how profanity influences brand perceptions over time, particularly for recognizable brands. This approach would also allow for a deeper exploration of how profanity might help build brand personality traits such as activity, aggressiveness, and simplicity, as suggested by this study.

Finally, the tendency for censored profanity to be perceived as less responsible than uncensored profanity was particularly intriguing. This finding raises questions about the broader effects of censorship, both in terms of swear words and other types of censored content, on brand responsibility perceptions. Future research could investigate this phenomenon further, examining how censorship impacts consumer perceptions across various contexts.

By addressing these limitations and exploring these directions, future studies can build on the findings of this research, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic use of profanity in brand communication.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Stimuli presented to each of the 6 groups

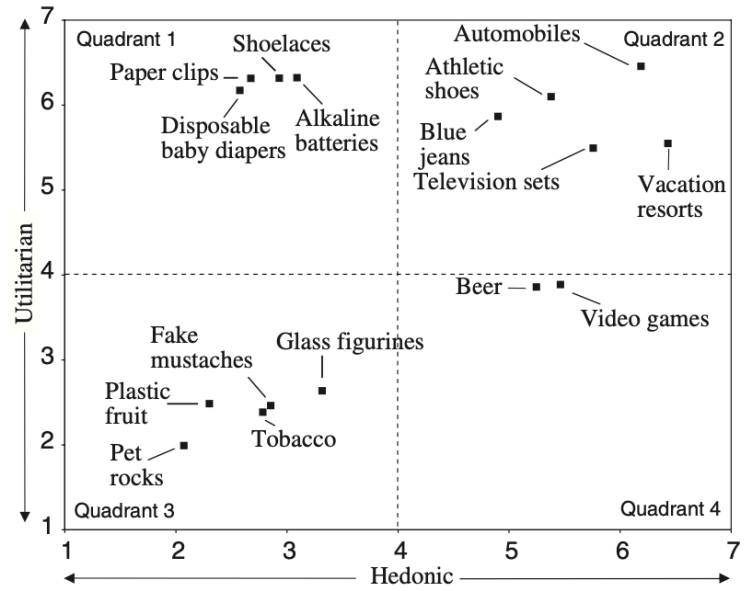
Euphemistic X (Non-Native, Native):

Censored X (Non-Native, Native):

Uncensored X (Non-Native, Native):

Appendix 2 – Voss et. Al, (2003) HED/UT scale's matrix

Product Categories Classified Using HED/UT



Appendix 3 – HED/UT original and adapted scale

Original Voss et al. (2003) version:	**Adapted scale used on survey:**
Utilitarian items:	Utilitarian items:
- Effective/ineffective	- Effective/Not effective at all
- Helpful/unhelpful	- Helpful/Not helpful at all
- Functional/not functional	- Functional/Not functional at all
- Necessary/unnecessary	- Necessary/Not necessary at all
- Practical/impractical	- Practical/Not practical at all
Hedonic items:	Hedonic items:
- Not fun/fun	- Fun/Not fun at all
- Dull/exciting	- Exciting/Not exciting at all
- Not delightful/delightful	- Delightful/Not delightful at all
- Not thrilling/thrilling	- Thrilling/Not thrilling at all
- Enjoyable/unenjoyable	- Enjoyable/Not enjoyable at all

Appendix 4 – Brand Trust Original and adapted scale

Delgado-Ballester et al., (2003) BTS version:	**Adapted scale used on survey:**
- With techbrand I obtain what I look for in a smartphone	-With Techbrand I obtain what I look for in a smartphone
- Techbrand is always at my consumption expectations level	-Techbrand is at my consumption expectations level
- Techbrand gives me confidence and certainty in the consumption of a smartphone	-Techbrand gives me confidence and certainty in the consumption of a smartphone
- Techbrand - never disappoints me	-Techbrand would never disappoint me
- Techbrand would be honest and sincere in its explanations	-Techbrand would be honest and sincere in its explanations
- I could rely on Techbrand	-I could rely on Techbrand
- Techbrand would make any effort to make me be satisfied	-Techbrand would make any effort to make me be satisfied
- Techbrand would repay me in some way for the problem with the smartphone	-Techbrand would repay me in some way for any problem with the smartphone

Appendix 5 – Survey

Introduction Block:

Hello and thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

I'm a student at Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics and this survey is part of my thesis for the Master of Management with a specialization in Strategic Marketing. Your participation will be part of a research on brand perceptions of an unknown technology brand and **will take less than 5 minutes**.

This survey is intended for respondents over 18 years old due to the **use of some unrefined speech**. If you are uncomfortable with this type of language, feel free to exit. By participating, you confirm that you are over 18 and **agree to respond voluntarily and honestly**. There are no right or wrong answers as long as you are truthful and honest. All **responses are anonymous** and will be used solely for the propose of this research.

Your input is greatly appreciated!

Q1: Do you agree with these terms?

(Allow one answer, force response)

- Yes, I agree
- No, I don't agree

Screening Block:

Q2: Is Portuguese your native language?

(Allow one answer, force response)

- Yes
- No

Q3: Do you speak English?

(Allow one answer, force response)

- Yes it's (one of) my second language(s)
- Yes, I'm an English native speaker
- No

Main Block:

Imagine that in your **next social media scroll** you come across the following post, the **teaser of a new smartphone** from a technology brand, named Techbrand (TB). Please **look**

carefully at the following image **for a few seconds:**

(one of the 6 stimuli options, the native euphemist version)

Q4: Products can be thought in terms of their **utilitarian features and value**, how they are useful, practical, and necessary. They can also be thought in terms of their **hedonic features and value**; that is, how they can provide pleasure, enjoyment or fun.

Please **consider this two dimensions** and rate **how you see and represent the phone** from TB on a scale from 1- Definitely Utilitarian to 7 - Definitely Hedonic.

(multiple choice, forced response, allowed one answer, horizontal alignment)

Q5: Please **think of the brand TB** that is advertising their new smartphone. On a scale from 1 - Not at all to 7 - Definitely, rate the **extent to which you think this brand**:

(Linkert matrix type, forced response, allowed one answer)

- Delivers on the promise of offering a very good phone
- Is trustworthy
- Is Relatable

- Is Authentic
- Feels physiologically close to you
- Is sophisticated
- Is intelligent
- Is ethical
- Is evil

Q6: If this brand's new **smartphone** matched your needs and budget, **how likely would you be to buy it**? (Rate on a scale from 1 to 7, being 1 - Not at all likely and 7 - Extremely likely)

(multiple choice, forced response, allowed one answer, horizontal alignment)

Q7: Based on your initial impression, **how satisfied** do you think you would be **with this brand's smartphone**? (Rate on a scale from 1 to 7, being 1 - Not at all satisfied and 7 - Extremely satisfied)

(multiple choice, forced response, allowed one answer, horizontal alignment)

Q8: Keeping in mind the image shown previously, please **rate how much** you think TB's new **smartphone exhibits the following characteristics** on a scale from 1 - Not at all to 7 - Extremely:

(Linkert matrix type, forced response, allowed one answer)

- Fun
- Exciting
- Delightful
- Thrilling
- Enjoyable
- Effective
- Helpful
- Functional
- Necessary
- Practical

Q9: To ensure the quality of the research and the accuracy of responses, please **select** the option '6' on the scale from 1 - Not at all to 7 - Definitely:

(multiple choice, forced response, allowed one answer, horizontal alignment)

Q10: Please indicate **how much you agree** with the **following statements** about Techbrand, the brand of the social media post presented above (on a scale from 1 to 7, being 1 – Strongly disagree and 7 – Strongly agree)

(Linkert matrix type, forced response, allowed one answer)

- With Techbrand I obtain what I look for in a smartphone
- Techbrand is at my consumption expectations level
- Techbrand gives me confidence and certainty in the consumption of a smartphone
- Techbrand would never disappoint me
- Techbrand would be honest and sincere in its explanations
- I could rely on Techbrand
- Techbrand would make any effort to make me be satisfied
- Techbrand would repay me in some way for any problem with the smartphone

Q11: Almost there! Only a few questions left
Keeping in mind the social media post, please indicate **how characteristic for the Techbrand** do you believe the **following personality traits** are? (On a scale from 1 to 7, being 1 - Not characteristic for the brand at all, and 7 - Very characteristic for the brand)

(Linkert matrix type, forced response, allowed one answer)

- Down to earth
- Stable
- Responsible
- Active
- Dynamic
- Innovative
- Aggressive
- Bold
- Ordinary
- Simple
- Romantic
- Sentimental

Demographics block:

Q12: What gender do you identify with?

(Allow one answer, force response)

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I rather not define my gender

Q13: How old are you?

(slider type, open response)

Q14: What is your native language?

(Multiple choice, allow one answer, dropdown format, force response)

Q15: Last question!
Do you believe you have answer to this survey before?

(Allow one answer, force response)

- No, this is the first time I'm answering
- Yes, I believe I have answered before

Appendix 6.1. – Means and St. Deviations for Dependent Variables (Language Proficiency X Swear word Style)

	Non-Native (EN)			**Native (EN)**		
	Euphemistic M (SD)	**Censored** M (SD)	**Uncensored** M (SD)	**Euphemistic** M (SD)	**Censored** M (SD)	**Uncensored** M (SD)
Trustworthy	4.07 (1.29)	3.76 (1.47)	4.3 (1.28)	3.82 (1.2)	3.88 (1.24)	3.96 (1.43)
Relatable	4.48 (1.29)	4.33 (1.55)	4.57 (1.46)	4.12 (1.54)	4.18 (1.49)	4.26 (1.69)
Feels close	3.86 (1.49)	3.98 (1.57)	3.91 (1.66)	3.43 (1.71)	3.69 (1.68)	3.92 (1.92)

Intelligent	4.45 (1.51)	4.13 (1.55)	4.58 (1.53)	3.92 (1.43)	4.2 (1.4)	4.48 (1.58)
Ethical	4.0 (1.27)	3.27 (1.55)	3.64 (1.46)	3.76 (1.33)	3.73 (1.19)	3.62 (1.81)
Evil	2.13 (1.34)	2.67 (1.63)	2.55 (1.5)	2.29 (1.36)	2.67 (1.60)	2.44 (1.64)
Purchase intention	3.91 (1.87)	4.05 (1.75)	4.11 (1.74)	3.61 (1.64)	4.04 (1.90)	3.84 (1.82)
Satisfaction	4.45 (1.33)	4.31 (1.39)	4.55 (1.22)	4.31 (1.16)	4.22 (1.20)	4.18 (1.24)
Hedonic Scale	4.51 (1.17)	4.57 (1.2)	4.66 (1.3)	4.39 (1.06)	4.51 (1.01)	4.52 (1.44)
Utilitarian Scale	4.73 (1.26)	4.41 (1.36)	4.71 (1.19)	4.69 (1.05)	4.4 (1.22)	4.45 (1.33)
Brand Trust Scale	3.96 (1.22)	3.93 (1.24)	3.95 (1.19)	3.86 (1.18)	3.96 (1.07)	4.03 (1.34)
Responsability	4.03 (1.19)	3.86 (1.34)	3.99 (1.36)	4.22 (1.33)	3.69 (1.31)	4.03 (1.6)
Emotionality	2.38 (1.37)	2.83 (1.64)	2.80 (1.56)	2.78 (1.57)	2.73 (1.50)	3.12 (1.74)

Appendix 6.2. – Means and St. Deviations for Dependent Variables (Swear word Style)

	Total Euphemistic M (SD)	**Total Censored** M (SD)	**Total Uncensored** M (SD)
Trustworthy	3.95 (1.25)	3.82 (1.36)	4.14 (1.36)
Relatable	4.31 (1.42)	4.25 (1.52)	4.42 (1.58)
Feels close	3.65 (1.61)	3.84 (1.62)	3.91 (1.78)
Intelligent	4.20 (1.49)	4.16 (1.47)	4.53 (1.54)
Ethical	3.89 (1.3)	3.49 (1.4)	3.63 (1.63)
Evil	2.21 (1.34)	2.67 (1.61)	2.5 (1.56)
Purchase intention	3.77 (1.76)	4.05 (1.81)	3.98 (1.78)
Satisfaction	4.38 (1.25)	4.26 (1.3)	4.37 (1.24)
Hedonic Scale	4.45 (1.12)	4.54 (1.11)	4.59 (1.36)
Utilitarian Scale	4.71 (1.16)	4.41 (1.29)	4.58 (1.26)
Brand Trust Scale	3.91 (1.19)	3.94 (1.16)	3.99 (1.26)

Responsability	4.12 (1.26)	3.78 (1.32)	4.01 (1.47)
Emotionality	2.57 (1.48)	2.78 (1.57)	2.96 (1.66)

Appendix 6.3. – Means and St. Deviations for Dependent Variables (Language)

	Total Non-Native (EN) M (SD)	**Total Native (PT)** M (SD)
Trustworthy	4.04 (1.36)	3.89 (1.28)
Relatable	4.46 (1.43)	4.18 (1.57)
Feels close	3.91 (1.56)	3.68 (1.77)
Intelligent	4.38 (1.53)	4.2 (1.48)
Ethical	3.64 (1.45)	3.7 (1.46)
Evil	2.45 (1.5)	2.47 (1.54)
Purchase intention	4.02 (1.78)	3.83 (1.79)
Satisfaction	4.43 (1.31)	4.24 (1.2)
Hedonic Scale	4.58 (1.22)	4.47 (1.18)
Utilitarian Scale	4.62 (1.28)	4.51 (1.2)
Brand Trust Scale	3.95 (1.21)	3.95 (1.19)
Responsability	3.96 (1.29)	3.98 (1.42)
Emotionality	2.67 (1.53)	2.88 (1.62)

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