

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE ACCOMMODATION OF
LINGUISTICS STYLES ON SOCIAL
MEDIA PAGE POSTINGS
TOWARDS CUSTOMER
ENGAGEMENT

NURUL HUDA BINTIJAFNI

PhD

November 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the strategies used by Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) restaurant owners to enhance customer engagement on social media, with a focus on language use in brand postings. As platforms like Facebook and Instagram become integral to marketing, understanding how linguistic styles influence engagement is crucial yet underexplored. A total of four SME restaurant owners in Kulim, Kedah were interviewed to examine how they craft posts and navigate challenges in using language effectively online. The methodology employed a triangulation process, which included semi-structured interviews with the owners, assessment of their Facebook page postings and interviews with selected customers to gain a holistic view of engagement strategies. Findings reveal that owners consciously tailor their language using emotionality, informality, and simplicity to connect with their audience. Many use conversational tones to appear approachable and relatable, while emotional appeals help establish personal resonance with customers. Simplified language is preferred to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. Additionally, personalized responses to comments and messages were used to build and maintain strong customer relationships. The methodology is clearly outlined, incorporating multiple data sources to ensure depth and reliability. The integration of customer perspectives further validates the owners' reported strategies and highlights the effectiveness of their linguistic choices. Overall, the study identifies a range of language-based strategies that SME restaurant owners use to foster customer interaction and brand loyalty on social media. The insights contribute to a framework for effective language use in digital marketing, offering practical guidance for SMEs aiming to strengthen their online presence and community engagement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Finally, I am reaching this page after what feels like a lifetime of not seeing daylight! Alhamdulillah, all praise is due to the Almighty, Allah S.W.T., for granting me the strength, clarity, and patience throughout this fulfilling yet challenging journey. This PhD has been a test of endurance and reflection, and I am deeply grateful for the many hands and hearts that have helped me along the way.

My deepest appreciation goes to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Permatang Pauh for the opportunity to pursue the Doctor of Philosophy in Business Management (BA950). I am especially thankful to my supervisors, Associate Professor Ts. Dr. Hj. Samsudin Wahab and Dr. Nor Aminin binti Khalid for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and thoughtful critiques. Your support shaped the direction and depth of this research more than words can convey.

Sincere thanks are extended to the restaurant owners and respondents who generously gave their time, insights, and experiences to this study. Your openness and cooperation were central to the research and have added real meaning and authenticity to the findings.

To my beloved parents, Dr. Jafni bin Ghazali and Mrs. _____, thank you for being my unwavering source of strength, love, and resilience. To my siblings, Ahmad Fahmi bin Jafni and Nurul Husna binti Jafni, thank you for the shared laughter and constant reminders that there is life beyond the thesis.

To the dear friends and quiet supporters who stayed close throughout this journey, whether through kind messages, shared silences or unexpected moments of lightness, your presence made all the difference. And to the one who stood beside me through it all, often between the lines and never seeking the spotlight, thank you for simply being there. Lastly, to the scholars and researchers whose work served as the foundation for this study, I owe a debt of gratitude.

Thank you all for making this journey a little less lonely. I can finally see the sun!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHORS'S DECLARATION	Hi
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Research	1
1.1.1 Introduction	
1.1.2 Advancements in IT and the Internet	1
1.1.3 The Rise of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Businesses in Malaysia	.3
1.1.4 The Rise of the SME Restaurant Businesses in Malaysia	5
1.1.5 The Emergence of E-Commerce in Malaysia	7
1.1.6 Social Media as a Platform	9
1.1.7 Brand Interaction from the Customers' Perspectives	11
1.1.8 Problem of Current Research	10
1.1.9 Social Media Brand Page among SME Restaurants	12
1.1.10 CAT as a Research Model in Social Media	13
1.1.11 Linguistics Styles Adoption in Social Media Brand Postings	15

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Background of the Research

This chapter introduces the context and background of this research, focusing on the role of language in enhancing customer engagement through social media. With the rise of digital platforms, businesses, particularly SMEs, have turned to social media as a primary tool for marketing and customer interaction. This chapter outlines the research objectives, the significance of examining linguistic styles in brand page postings, and the theoretical framework guiding the study, which draws on the CAT. The aim is to explore how SMEs can strategically tailor their social media communication to foster stronger connections with customers, particularly within the restaurant industry.

1.1.2 Advancements in Information Technology (IT) and the Internet

The rapid evolution of Information Technology (IT), particularly the internet, has profoundly reshaped the global business landscape. What started as a basic network for communication and information exchange has grown into a powerful, multifaceted tool that touches nearly every aspect of modern life. Since its commercial inception in the 1990s, the internet has expanded beyond its original purpose to support diverse sectors, including business, education, healthcare, tourism, and government (Tran-Dang & Kim, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023). This remarkable transformation underscores the role of the internet in fostering globalization, enabling seamless communication, collaboration, and access to international markets (Nambisan & Luo, 2022).