
THE POWER OF LANGUAGE



Artificial intelligence.
Human language.
Awesome.

Company executives understand the inherent business value of being able to engage with their customers. However, COVID-19 has made the ability to connect with customers more important than ever – pushing it to the top of the leadership agenda.

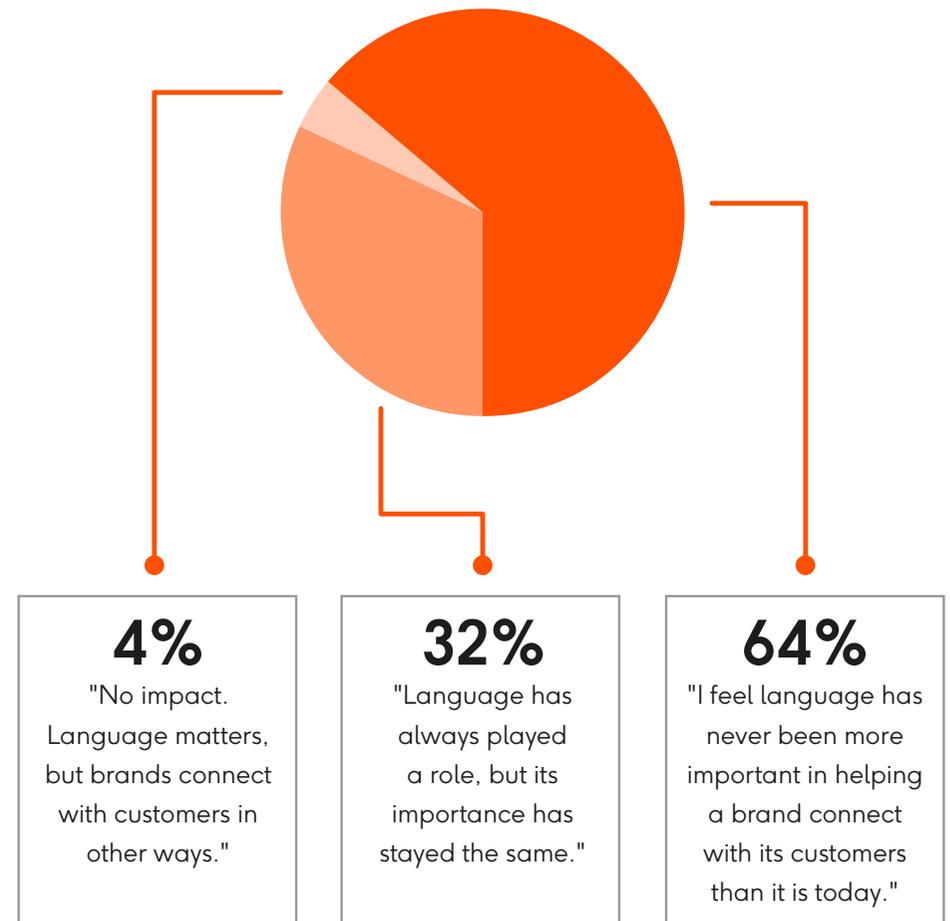
A marketing campaign that might have previously evoked a positive emotion, such as excitement or anticipation, might be considered inconsiderate and out of touch today. A language error can be fatal both to a brand's reputation and to its hard-earned brand equity. Cancel culture, internet trolling, and fake news make a company's use of language – what it says and how it says it – a critical area of focus.

Adding to the challenge is the struggle many businesses face of creating enough content that uses the right language and aligns with their brand's voice. The collective pressures are enough to bring marketers to their knees. Yet, as challenging as these waters are to navigate, they also present a unique opportunity for brands to connect and communicate with customers in a targeted, educational, and empathetic way. Those that focus on optimizing their brand language will maximize engagement, loyalty and revenue, even in these difficult times.

To gain visibility into the increasingly important part that brand language plays in the current (COVID-19) climate, Phrasee® recently sponsored a survey, conducted by Dynata, of more than 300 senior marketers in North American organizations in industries including: ecommerce/retail; travel/hospitality; restaurants; communications, telecoms and utilities; and banking, finance, and insurance.

The results of this survey outline the challenges that enterprise marketers experience in creating high-quality branded content, and provide insight into the growing role that cutting-edge technology – specifically, artificial intelligence (AI) – has in meeting these challenges.

Impact of COVID-19 on importance of language
(Total respondents)



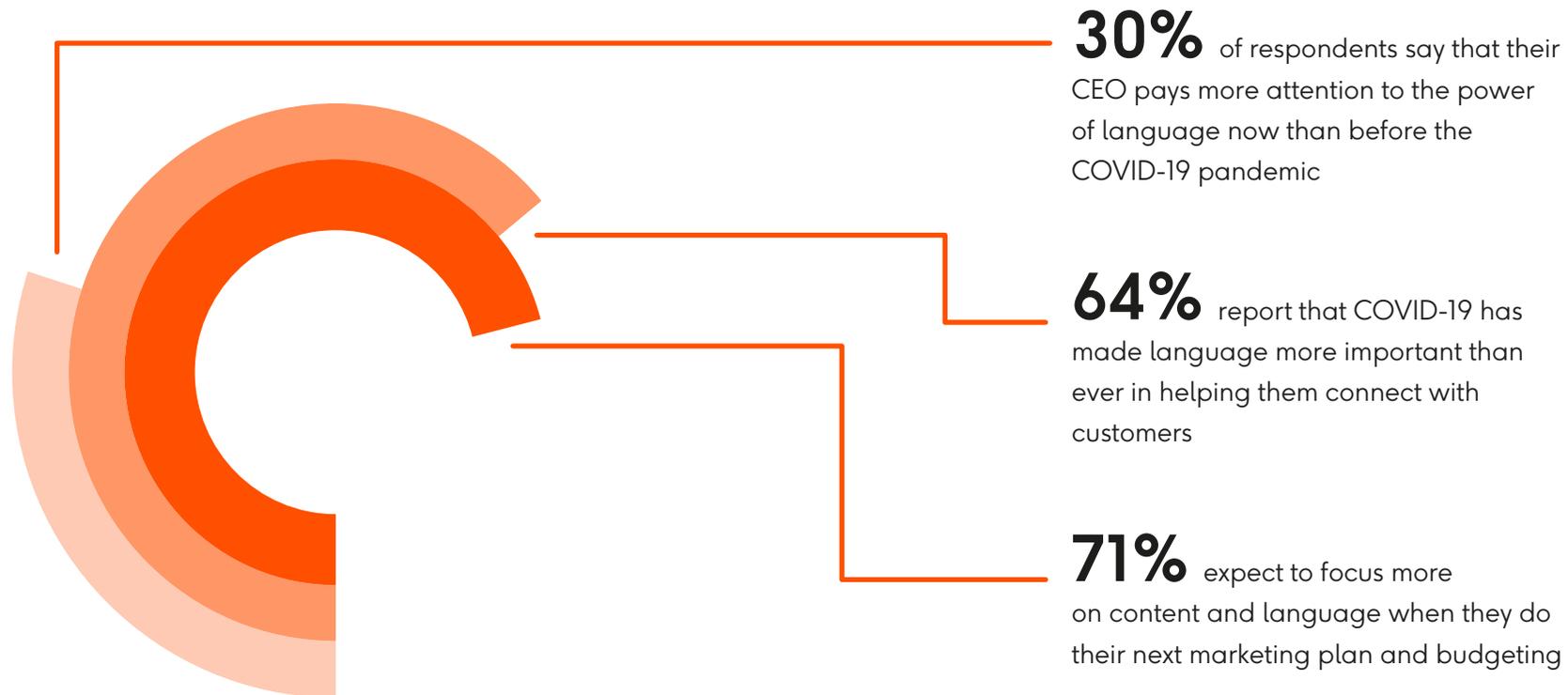
Marketers feel brand language has never been more important.

It may seem obvious that language is important, but the global pandemic has led many companies to have a laser focus on brand language. The Phrasee survey found that nearly one-third (30%) of marketers feel that their CEO now pays more attention to the power of language than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faced with a growing need to demonstrate sensitivity considering sweeping job losses and other disruptions to everyday life, businesses are scrutinizing their communication, with 64% reporting that COVID-19 has made language more important than ever in helping them connect with customers. This focus is only likely to increase, with a majority (71%) saying they expect to focus more on content and language when they do their next marketing plan and budgeting.

Big brands have weighed in. Phrasee interviewed marketing leaders at several of the world's most innovative brands, including FARFETCH, Groupon, and Uber.

"COVID-19 has heightened the awareness of the language we use at the highest levels of the company," said Gabrielle Stafford, Vice President of Global Marketing at Groupon. Groupon's chief executives are scanning subject lines to ensure that they are appropriate, which Stafford says is testament to how important language has become for the brand. "Pivoting our brand language to focus on the definition of 'experience'... was an important tool for customer engagement and retention during COVID-19."



Overall, businesses struggle to achieve a high level of copywriting quality.

Consumers are bombarded with content from their favorite vendors in all industries. But as in most things in life, quality is just as much – if not more – important than quantity. Copywriting quality has become a major headache for marketers as brands adjust their brand language to address the current climate.

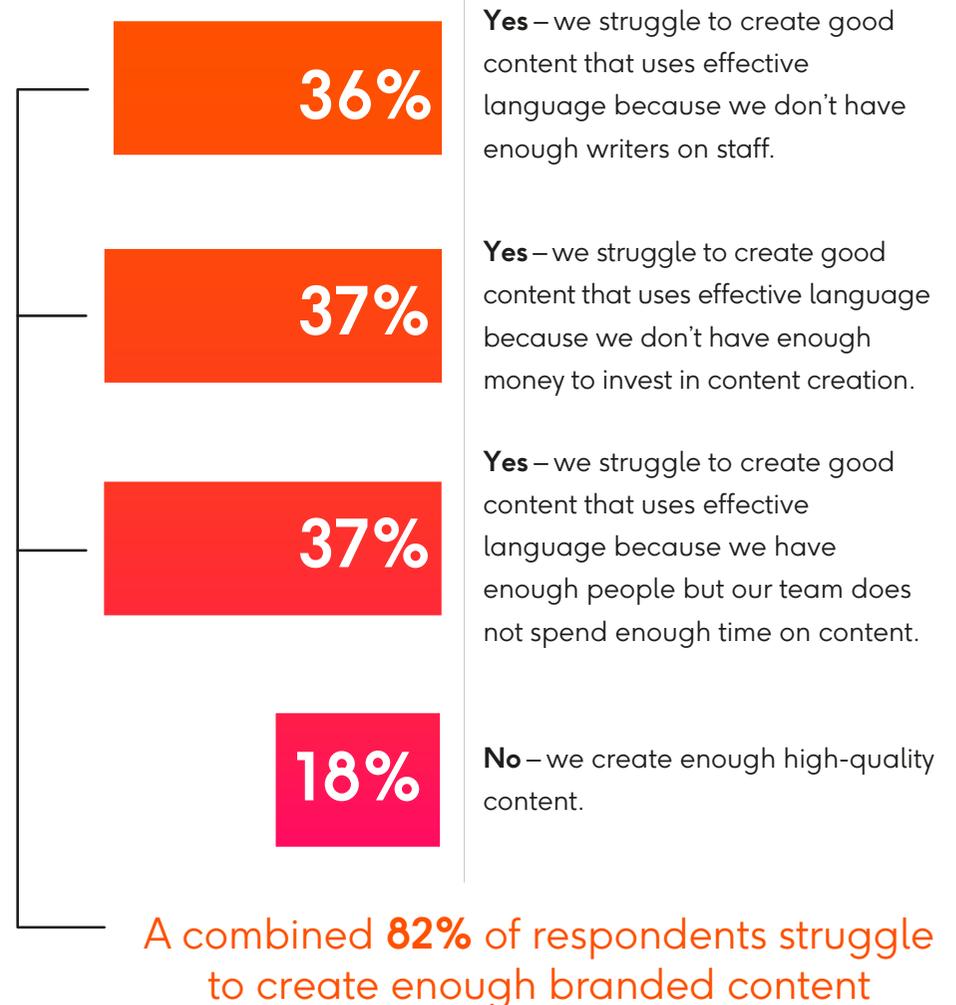
While three out of five marketers measure the effectiveness of their language (60%), most (82%) struggle to create high-quality branded content.

The reasons vary. Among the companies surveyed, 36% report an insufficient number of staff writers, 37% report a lack of funds invested in content creation, and 37% report an insufficient amount of time spent on content creation. As a result, the majority (51%) are unable to create consistent messaging across all channels, at scale, and aligned to their brand.

According to US experts, the pandemic could last two years, with fallout affecting consumer habits and business industries for at least the next decade. Over the course of the next year, businesses will be racing to find ways to alleviate these challenges, enabling them to create content with impactful language that also aligns with their brand to best reach their target audiences.

Technology is the cure, says Gareth Jones, Global Chief Marketing Officer at FARFETCH. "Embracing technology to optimize our marketing language has emerged as a must-have," says Jones. "It's the use of technology to generate language that is more compelling than a copywriter can write alone, and which learns over time, so the performance of your marketing just gets better and better."

Whether organization struggles to create enough branded content (Total respondents, multiple responses)



There is growing desire to invest in AI to leverage the power of language.

Phrasee's survey found that nearly half of respondents (47%) want technology to play a larger role in their organizations' marketing in the future. In addition, only 58% feel they are equipped with the right technology to future-proof their own roles in marketing. More than half (53%) believe that technology in marketing should have some form of human oversight. Yet there is drive for new tools and capabilities.

According to the survey, 73% of respondents plan to invest in AI technology to support marketing initiatives in the next 18 months. More than one-third (37%) will invest in AI specifically to do copywriting, and more than half (53%) of respondents in banking, finance, and insurance would invest in AI that could generate copy that is aligned with their brand.

"I believe that the way forward is a combination of humans and AI," said Marty Ellis, Senior Director Global CRM, Uber. "In my experience, the performance of language generated by AI can – when done properly – outperform the human-generated versions in every case."

The path forward: Enterprises seeking to leverage language optimization to maximize customer engagement and revenue, particularly during the COVID-19 era, should:

Acknowledge the environment:

Adjust brand communications to recognize the environment customers are living and working in. This could even mean removing entire categories of communications that may otherwise appear insensitive or tone-deaf.

Prioritize customers' needs:

Move away from sales-focused, transactional brand language towards more helpful, empathetic messaging. Avoid the 'hard sell'.

Explore the potential of AI:

Weigh up the pros and cons of employing AI technology and automation to consistently create brand language at scale.



