SPILLING THE TEA:
THE LANGUAGE OF GEN Z IN MARKETING

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Abstract

Language is a core element of any communication, including strategies and practices used by marketers and businesses. The challenging aspect of it, however, is that it is constantly changing. Every year thousands of new words and terms are created as a consequence of changes in technological, economical, and social environments. With Gen Z making up more than a quarter of the global population, it is important to understand and integrate their specific use of language to create successful communication strategies. Previous literature suggests that the choice of language and its customization are important factors that determine marketing performance. This paper aims to add to this field of study by examining the way Generation Z receives slang in marketing materials and understanding whether the practice of including them is effective. Experimental research was carried out in collaboration with the WKND Agency and Latvian Fund for Nature. The results show that among Gen Z participants usage of slang and slang & action minded framing in advertising has significant effect on emotional appeal, self-congruity, and value orientation.

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1. Introduction

As of 2023, more than a quarter, or about 2.5 billion of the global population is Generation Z (TrueList, 2023) which makes the topic of this generation highly relevant in the context of marketing and business environment (Dabija et al., 2019). As the first generation to grow up in the digital age, Gen Z individuals exhibit unique characteristics, preferences, and behaviours that significantly impact consumer trends and market dynamics. Consequently, it also results in changing marketing practices, such as building authentic relationships, prioritizing inclusivity, making materials concise, and many others. However, the aspect of this generation that has not been thoroughly explored so far is the use of language, which as a matter of fact could play an important role in communicating specifically with this generation, because the everyday language they use is rather unique (Jeresano & Marigrace, 2022). Such slang as *stan, low-key, sip tea, hits different,* and many more can frequently be heard when talking with Generation Z or seen on different social media platforms.

The fact that language choice and customization play a significant role when it comes to marketing effectiveness is already a firmly established finding in previous literature, which has been studied so far, and it has been proven that a significant positive impact on advertisement effectiveness can be created by changing just a few words or communication manner (Ki & Kim, 2012). Further, the previous literature has examined the best content and channels for various generations that marketers can employ to effectively communicate. Nevertheless, with the introduction of new words by the new generation, which happens every year, especially under the influence of technology, not much is known about the nowadays most often used language phenomenon of Gen Z – slang.

By examining how Generation Z perceives slang in marketing materials, this study seeks to close this gap and assist businesses in determining whether to use such an atypical language feature in order to appeal to their target audience. With Gen Z having an enormous influence and power in the market, understanding the best strategy to incorporate in marketing strategies is crucial for marketers and businesses.

To achieve the goal of the study, this research was done in collaboration with the WKND Agency and Latvian Fund for Nature to potentially gain valuable insights into its customers' preferences, views, and attitudes about personalized communication. The selected audience for this experiment were young adults aged 18 to 26 who are daily users of Gen Z slang in their

language. The experiment will use three advertisements of the Latvian Fund for Nature - one without personalization and two others - with different types of personalized communication. Every respondent will be exposed to one advertisement and then answer questions about their perceptions of the advertisement. Consequently, we will have one control group and two treatment groups. We define two research questions:

1. *How does including Gen Z slang in marketing slogans affect Gen Z consumers' emotional attitudes toward the advertisement and ad engagement?*

1. *How does frequency of Gen Z slang usage impact Gen Z consumers' attitudes towards advertisements with slang?*

This paper consists of literature review on the subjects of different aspects of marketing with a focus on language use, and audience segmentation concentrating on Generation Z, description of research methodology, followed by an analysis of the findings, and a discussion of contribution and implications.
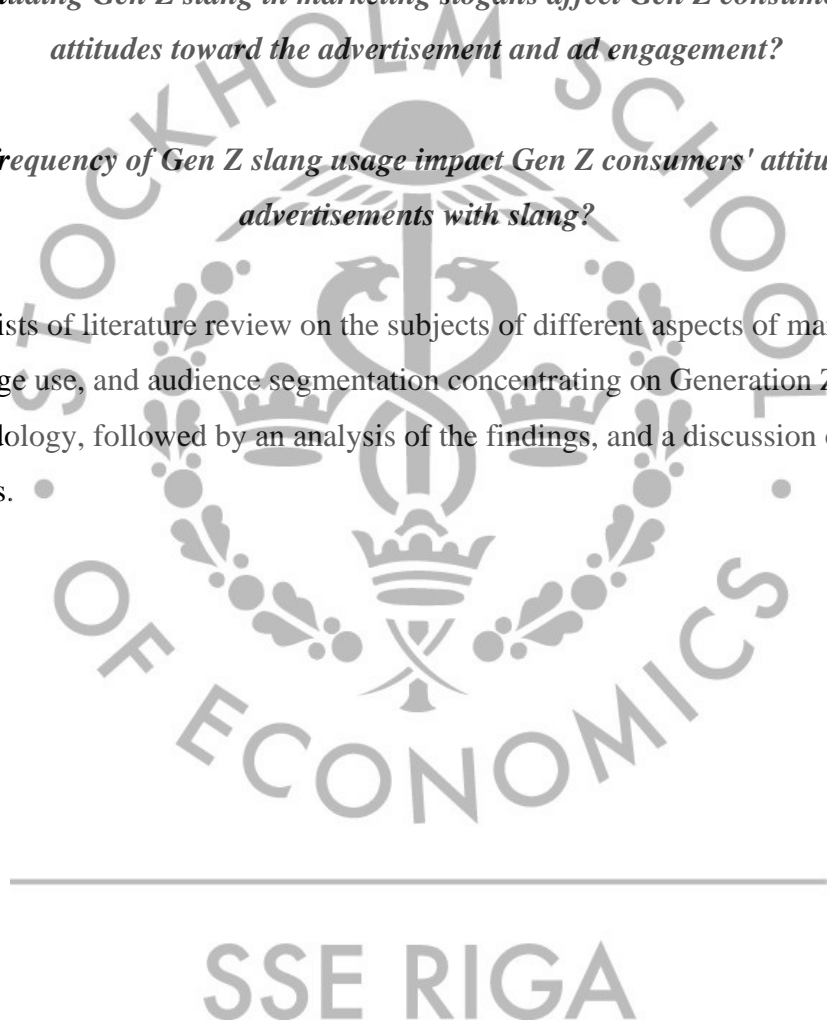
2. Literature Review

This section explores previous literature on various aspects of language and audience segmentation in the context of marketing, to understand the importance and effects of adapting language to a specific audience for successful communication. Additionally, this section also includes an in-depth insight into the characteristics and preferences of different generations, with an emphasis on Generation Z, in order to create an understanding of choosing the most appropriate language variation for this age group.

2.1. Language in Marketing

2.1.1 Slogans. Slogans in advertising, also known as taglines, are an important component of marketing materials because of their wide usage in marketing campaigns (Wang et al., 2016). Slogan is "a short easily remembered phrase, especially one used to advertise an idea or a product" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The characteristics as well as the significance of the slogan make it a suitable marketing material with which to study the effect of the choice of language, or specifically the inclusion of slang, on advertising performance.

Research supports the fact that slogans, if designed properly, play a beneficial role in enhancing the image as well as recognition of the brand (Rosengren & Dahlen, 2006). Previously researchers have found the most efficient process of an effective creation of slogans in the form of six steps: "positioning the brand in an apparent way, joining the slogan to the brand, repeating the slogan, using jingles, employing the slogan at the outset, and being innovative with long-term aims" (Kohli et al. 2007). Whereas, what we want to investigate is whether the choice of language or the inclusion of slang in them also affects the so far recognized positive performance.

2.1.2. Language use. Language is the core element of human interaction and communication and its importance in marketing is no less. Previous research suggests that there are different effects of the use of language and that it holds a significant impact on marketing strategies. Language and its use undeniably have a substantial influence on shaping how customers see the advertisements or even the brand itself. It is a tool for transferring different ideas across different people with different cultural backgrounds, and its possibilities of use are very wide, allowing advertisers to play with words and manipulate phrases (Vasiloaia, 2018). As

small as the choice of words and phrases together with the communication manner can significantly impact the effectiveness of any advertisement and the choice of consumers (Kim & Kim, 2012).

Language has even been characterized as one of the central elements of any slogans, taglines, or copies power in a campaign and therefore should be carefully and strategically designed. The emotional appeal that can be created with different audiences might be considered the main reason for the importance of language in marketing. Namely, positive language has the potential to create a strong bond with the consumer (Aaker & Stayman, 1992) whilst some other style can change the engagement negatively (Syrdal et al., 2023). Similarly, a positive influence on attitudes towards language can be achieved using creative language, that is using literally incorrect words or phrases (McQuarrie et al, 2009).

The importance of language can be observed already in the very first step of business when choosing the brand name, the first customer association with the company. Similarly, the product, whose memorability in relation to linguistic features has been studied by Lowrey et al. (2003), concluding that positive changes in memorability can be observed, but mostly only if the brand is less known. Such positive changes under the influence of the use of linguistic instruments can also be observed in slogans after the inclusion of *"alliterations, initial plosives, word-phrase repletion, puns, and well-known phrases"* (Miller & Toman, 2016).

There are a variety of linguistic elements that can be incorporated into brands or advertisements messaging that have to be consistent to create a strong brand image (Keller, 1993). The diversity of these elements creates creative freedom in the use of language, thereby expanding advertisers' opportunities to create material appealing and catchy. One of the most comprehensive studies about these elements that showcase the extent of their usage was done by Proctor (2013). In this study, 102 TIME Magazine advertisements were being looked into, and within them, linguistic features could already be found, the following of which were most frequently used: *"alliteration, paronomasia, repetition, metaphor, expression, converseness, rhyming, word coinage, contradiction"*. This paper not only emphasizes the extensive usage of the language features but also the wide possibilities to combine and alter them (see Appendix A).

2.1.3. Personalized advertising. Although language itself has huge power, it does not work as an effective marketing tool if its elements and messages are not tailored to the target

audience. This is where personalized advertising plays a very important role. Personalized branding, also known as personalized, targeted, or custom advertising, has been a common practice for many years now, and nowadays, under the influence of the digital era and data-driven decision management, is considered to be a crucial part of any branding related strategy (Hearn, 2008). Research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is a higher probability of positive consumer reactions to advertisements when they are customized to different characteristics of the target audience (Han et al., 2018). Based on Next in Personalization 2021 Report by McKinsey & Company (2021) over 70 percent of people view personalization as self-evident which makes it an integral part of business that can significantly increase revenues and improve customer relations.

The benefits of personalization include revenue enhancement by up to 15%, an increase in marketing spend efficiency by up to 30%, and a reduction of the customer acquisition cost by more than half (Boudet et. al., 2019). Alongside the financial benefits, also comes the customer's willingness to engage and stay loyal to the company, which based on Epsilons study (2018) is 80% of the market after exposure of personalization, and the boost of conversion rates, based on Monetate's Ecommerce Quarterly Report (2019), is evident after exposure of personalization. Ultimately, this strategy improves the overall competitiveness of the company (Harvard Business Review, 2018).

In a general sense, personalization and segmentation are two different marketing strategies yet these terms are often used interchangeably. Personalization is targeted to individual customers and their experiences, offering specific products at a specific time and place (Polk et al., 2020). Namely, retargeting instruments are used to alter visuals and messages according to consumers' interests or previous buying and overall interaction habits (Sengupta, 2013). One of the most powerful and widely used retargeting tools in advertising is dynamic creative optimization, a technology that, using real-time data, generates different versions of an advertisement utilizing a common foundational creative while customizing specific elements to resonate with the audience (Amazon Advertising, 2023).

Segmentation on the other hand focuses on groups of customers which will also be our approach in this paper. This practice intends to be likable by the brands preferably a wide audience (Manai & Holmlund, 2015), and to simulate an intimate and deeper connection with these people (Johnson, 2019, p.14) through how the brand looks and sounds. Messaging

alteration and story creation based on customers' demographics or behaviour are some examples of segmentation strategies.

This method has evolved so far that brands even have personalities consisting of their consumer characteristics, selection, and impressions, or as Johnson (2019, p.15) has said "brands want to be people". The wide and growing use of this practice is also explained by previous research that firstly states that customers truly appreciate such an approach, which in turn improves marketing success (De Keyzer et.al., 2022) and secondly uses the congruity theory to explain the increasing relevance that the consumer perceives (Dodoo & Wen 2019).

Congruity theory supports the presumption that the character of consumption has gotten more psychological (Dittmar & Beattie, 1998) and researchers have recognized that satisfaction of people's emotional needs has become a significant reason for consumption along with financial and practical purposes (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Self-congruity theory suggests that consumers favor companies and goods they believe to have characteristics similar to their own personalities (Sirgy, 1982). This theory can be used in marketing by creating an appropriate overall image as well as specific materials that will resonate with a certain audience's self-image (Baker et al., 2020), including altering the usage of language. Previous studies have shown that the tone of voice or the formulation of phrases if in line with consumers beliefs or qualities, can enhance the relevance and standpoint of the message (Dodoo & Wen, 2019).The use of this practice can be justified by its broad application in explaining a range of consumer behaviour and outcomes (Lay, 2021) and is endorsed by several social psychology researchers (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). In the context of our research, congruity theory substantiates the fact why advertising material, in our case a slogan, adapted to a specific audience, in our case Gen Z, using language features, would be more effective.

2.2. Audience Segmentation

2.2.1. Target audience. To successfully employ personalization, the first step is to be clear about the target audience which is a fundamental part of branding and marketing. Determining and understanding the target audience of the brand or campaign is crucial to creating content that appeals to and is relevant to this group. The importance of recognizing the audience has been stressed by several scholars such as Kotler & Armstrong (2016), Godin (1999), and Duncan & Moriarty (1998).

Regardless of the time or setting, it is crucial to consider consumer groups that have peculiar characteristics and preferences in order to benefit from these people. The only difference nowadays is the rapidly changing environment that created an even bigger necessity to fully understand consumers and their behaviour. The process of dividing the audience into several groups consists of looking at such characteristics as demographics, psychographics, and behaviour (Beane & Ennis, 1987).

In recent years, a lot of attention, both in general business operations and in marketing specifically, has been focused on Generation Z, since the influence and purchasing power of this generation is growing rapidly (Fromm, 2022). Furthermore, the topic of Generation Z has become increasingly popular due to its significant differences from other generations in various aspects starting from decision-making and consumption to emotional features (Goldring & Azab, 2020). Research also shows that this generation should be considered a niche and exclusive market that can be used successfully if explored further (Giunta, 2020).

As we want to contribute to the field of marketing, we see that by exploring the communication patterns of Gen Z, businesses and marketing agencies could use our findings to create successful marketing materials.

2.2.2. Generational cohorts. Because of considerable differences starting from personality to motivation and work values, generational research is an important step in making successful decisions in various matters. However, there are conflicting approaches of defining generations that create divided opinions of the overall understanding of generations (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Overall, there are two theoretical methods for defining generations, one of which is based on social forces (Mannheim, 1952) and the other on cohorts (Ryder, 1965). Whilst both of these methodologies recognize that the historical environment shapes social groups depending on the time born, the work of Ryder which was further developed by Lyons and Kuron included a demographic perspective, which allows one to view generations as uniform groups with set boundaries. Based on this perspective such generational categories as the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha have emerged, and people are divided into these categories based on their year of birth. This is the concept that we are going to use in our paper to look at the target audience which is Generation Z. Yet to understand the significance of the need for generational segmentation, before looking at Gen Z specifically, a brief outline of the characteristics of each cohort is provided below.

Characterizing the Silent Generation, born from 1928 to 1945, which has experienced quite tragic and historically important events, traditional values, hard work, and loyalty are stressed (Milkman, 2017). Baby Boomers, born from 1946 to 1964, have been perceived as optimistic and hard-working (Costanza et al., 2012), moreover, their social awareness and activism have been emphasized which most likely arose after experiencing several societal movements (Bristow, 2016). After growing up in an unstable economic and political environment, it is believed that Generation X, born from 1965 to 1980, is independent and focused on work-life balance (Zabel et al., 2017). Millennials, or Generation Y, born from 1981 to 1996, under the influence of the internet and technologies, are seen as confident or even self-obsessed and conceited (Grubbs et al., 2019), nevertheless, they have also been described as team-oriented and concerned with external matters (Sollohub, 2019, p.25.). Being heavily influenced by the era of digital technology and social media, those who identify as Generation Z, born from 1996 to 2009, are seen with a high capability to adapt, a full awareness of social issues, and an entrepreneurial spirit (Gomez et al., 2020). Finally, there is Generation Alpha, born after 2009, to which, compared to previous generations and after having the most influence from technology, greater curiosity, creativity, and independence are attributed (Drugas, 2022).

Many researchers and companies endorse generational cohorts (Raymer et al., 2017) mainly because of this approach's practicality (Smol & Sutton, 2002) both in terms of understanding behavioural differences and creating successful communication with different people.

2.2.3. Gen Z. To better understand the audience studied in our paper, a subsection and introducing this generation in more detail is required. There are many different proposals in the literature available about what Generation Z is, how should it be called, and what characteristics it possesses. Below we have compiled an overview of different researchers' views on Gen Z.

Authors (year)	Years	Names	Characteristics
Tapscott (2008)	1998 - 2008	Net Generation	Picky, appreciate sustainable practices, express their opinion and complaints, expect customization, and quick service.
Berkup (2014)	After 1995	Technology Generation, Digital Generation	Reliance, freedom, individualism, addiction to technology and speed.
Madden (2017)	1995 - 2009	Post-Millennial	Technology-advanced, content creators, with many social connections, adaptive.

Twenge (2017)	1995 - 2012	iGeneration, iGen	Compared to previous generations, less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy, and completely unprepared for adulthood.
Francis & Hoefel (2018)	1995 - 2010	TrueGen	Continuously search for truth, experiment with different ways of being themselves, value authenticity.
Dimock (2019)	After 1997	Generation Z, Gen Z, iGeneration, Homelanders	More fearful, anxious, lonely, pragmatic, and thrifty than members of previous generations. Globally oriented, and diversity-minded.

Table 1: The timeframe, name, and characteristics of Generation Z. Table created by the authors.

Summarizing the table, although the opinions about this generation slightly differ among scholars, which can occur due to various reasons such as culture, geography, or methodology, there are some common traits that most have associated with the members of this generation.

The characteristics and beliefs of Generation Z differ from the previous ones due to such circumstances as not having known a world without wars, always having access to technology and information, or being on social media (Twenge, 2017).

First, with 61 million members, this generation is regarded as one of the largest, on top of which their purchasing power is massive compared to Millennials and Gen X (Du & Milligan, 2019). This aspect is not being missed by companies and marketers, because by successfully understanding and using the buying potential of these generations, a significant profit increase and competitive advantage gain can be achieved (Young, 2015).

Second, this generation is more advanced in technologies (Jorgensen, 2003) and consequently more dependent on technologies than other generations which changes their expectations of businesses' online environment. This increasing technology saturation has led to different communication methods online, such as giving the opportunity to be a part of the content creation by sharing your personal experience, which is important for this group as they see themselves as collaborators (Perlstein, 2017). The presence of technology is also one of the reasons for shaping the way of thinking of this generation because in a way it opens and connects the borders all around the world, allowing getting to know and understand different cultures and environments.

Third, Generation Z pays attention to the environmental consciousness and protection strategies of businesses even more than other generations do (Dabija et al., 2019). This concern is related to the expanding issues and challenges the earth faces with pollution and its

repercussions. The favor of sustainable practices and green products is reflected in their willingness to spend more money on eco-friendly products which is also linked to the aforementioned purchasing power they own. Companies, in their daily operations as well as during the development of campaigns, must keep in mind that more than half of Gen Z members select retailers based on activities that provide a clean environment (Meehan, 2016). Along with green thinking, driven by the desire to make the world a better place, the generation of Gen Z is also very open and active in social issues. This eagerness to support and desire to help people is also formed by the altruism inherent in these young people. All this thinking about social and environmental issues has led to GenZ being called the generation of activists (Segel & Hatami, 2023), with more and more young people joining the activist communities at a very young age. As this level of activism grows rapidly, it becomes such a big part of this generation's daily life that they even consider it to be a part of their personality, which in turn makes this process very personal and passionate (Wingard, 2022). Evidence of the number of activists of this generation can often be seen in everyday life, by how much they actually use their voice and how many young people actually take action in various social and environmental organizations.

Finally, members of Generation Z are free to experiment and express themselves with the intention of finding their own personality and creating an authentic identity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In addition, this group of people has to stand out either by unique opinions, style, communication manner, or any other element that could differentiate them from other people (OC&C, 2019). This kind of self-exploring leads to greater openness and freedom among this group, which subsequently also applies to their appeal to various marketing materials. Accumulating issue is that the strategy of creating digital creative materials that would get Gen Z's attention is increasingly difficult to create, therefore, it should be understood what artistic or linguistic elements are attractive to this group, for all that the literature on this issue is limited.

Although many other characteristics of Generation Z influence today's market, the ones mentioned above already outline the importance of perceiving this generation separately. The importance of recognition of Generation Z in marketing particularly has also been explored by some papers, and many researchers have shared their opinion of the importance of taking into account the Gen Z generation in any marketing decisions. Bieleń & Kubiczek (2020) even found that although businesses do adapt to the changes introduced by Generation Z, they do not publicize it properly.

Besides this market group recognition, it's important to understand how to deal with it, and since there is an environment saturated with different materials, in which many use similar strategies, it is necessary to find a new approach to talk to this generation. In order to develop this approach, businesses need to invest in researching this audience, which based on Southgate (2017) is a justified expenditure in long-term business value.

Considering the importance of recognizing and understanding Gen Z discussed in this chapter, our goal is to collect the necessary information to create the most effective and successful content that will appeal to this audience.

2.3. Language variations

In different situations and for different audiences there are variations of language used, and sometimes they can not follow the guidelines and are unusual.

The effectiveness of the use of unusual language can be observed centuries ago, when in his plays Shakespeare surprised readers by breaking different language rules. It has been studied that this practice creates a positive brain response in the readers, in this case making the play more interesting to read (Roberts et al., 2006). Increased attention and interest are noticeable not only among readers but generally in any situation where some unusual element is used in the language which makes it noticeably different (Adams, 2009, p. 165).

This section will look at different variations of language that are used and how adapting these variations to the audience can improve marketing performance. Despite initial negative perceptions, both anglicisms and slang have evolved into favored tools for marketers who, taking into account the differences in responses from different advertisements among each generation, can create successful marketing strategies.

2.3.1. Anglicisms. An attribute that is worthwhile to mention and can be commonly seen within the language of marketing are Anglicisms - *"a word or phrase from the English language employed in another language"* ("Anglicism," 2023). In an everyday context, it could be seen as a phenomenon because of how widespread and impactful they are in other languages, yet it should be kept in mind that languages are evolving and transforming in tandem with the progression of society which is quite noteworthy nowadays.

Although Anglicisms have been perceived negatively for a very long time of their existence, the view of this language feature has slowly but positively changed. The negative

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judgment of this element has been justified by its unaestheticness, unnecessariness, and the disposure of non-intelligence (Fischer & Pulaczewska, 2008, p.16). Some scholars believe that this language tool is a threat to a country's native language and that many of them are simply unnecessary because they can be replaced by the native language (Șimon et al., 2021). This concern has also been linked to UNESCO's 2002 warning about the possibility of extinction of less represented languages (UNESCO Warns, 2002).

However, the sharp change to digital communication platforms and globalization have brought some changes and switched people's minds. Along with changes in society and the emergence of new technologies, comes the need for new terms, and since English has become the language of many industries, it is convenient and sometimes inevitable for foreign languages to borrow something from it. The strongest presence of anglicisms is in areas such as culinary arts, sports, scientific discourse, social interactions, economic discourse, advertising, the entertainment industry, and transportation (Șimon et al., 2021).

With regards to Latvia, people mention that it is easier and more comfortable to express yourself using Anglicisms, especially among friends and acquaintances, because the vocabulary is larger ("Aizliegtais Paņēmiens", 2022).

Such an open mind to linguistic borrowings is not only a result of globalization, instead already in the first half of the 20th century Bakhtin (1982) developed a concept that assumes that a single national language is an illusion and that representatives of different social groups will always create their own "language" that will more accurately reflect their thoughts and needs.

It has been studied that commonly it is young people, as a group of society, who find themselves in a particularly saturated multilingual environment, which promotes their ability to quickly create their own terms and adapt those around them (Lee, 2019). And it is precisely this group of society nowadays that creates such an informal language tool as slang.

2.3.2. Slang. The fact that both Generation Z and the use of language have a significant impact on the creation of marketing strategies, a part of anglicisms that is of interest to us is slang.

Before all else, what does slang mean? It is safe to say people can recognize slang when they encounter it, and they can also incorporate it into their own speech. But it can happen unconsciously. As defined by Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), slang is *"very informal language that*

is used esp. in a speech by particular groups of people and which sometimes includes words that are not polite".

Given that the definitions slightly vary among different sources, it is a complex and rich subject of study, explored by many academics with different views on this aspect of language. Although the literature on slang dates back as far as Whitman's 1856 essay, Dumas & Lighter's 1978 paper, Partridge's 1993 general consideration of slang, or Lighter's chapter in 2001, in our view, one of the best sources currently available is Michael Adams book "Slang: The People's Poetry", written in 2009.

Keeping in mind the complexity of slang as a linguistic element, there is a reasonable belief that it goes beyond being a lexical phenomenon and collection of words. It is a linguistic practice connected to social necessities and behaviors, particularly the desire to conform to distinguish oneself (Adams, 2009, p. 6). Another functionality of slang is that it is an aesthetic element that people enjoy including in their language because of its casualty and playfulness, and also to demonstrate their poeticness and overall language skills. These characteristics of slang, which make the language more clever, vivid, and memorable, also explain its wide use among advertisers. In short, slangs just stand out (Adams, 2009, p. 9).

As for slang importance in the social environment, it constitutes language used within a particular group, indicating who is a member of that particular group. This means that one of the most important conditions of slang is that it is used within a group with shared interests. This concept has been explained by comparing slang with fashion, indicating that both serve the same purpose. Forbye, thinking about the role of fashion in society, it definitely has its negative aspects, which is a display of authority and social prestige. Slang also has the same dark side. The negative reputation of this linguistic element also stems from the belief that it is used, and it is only necessary to do and hide bad things, which in a sense also has historical justification and political significance. However, this negative view of slang can easily be refuted, highlighting that slang, regardless of age, race, religion, or status, is used by all.

An important characteristic of slang, which is relevant to the basis of this paper, is that it is predominantly linked with the younger generation since they use the most radical forms of it most frequently. The reasoning could be the short life of slang, which is due to its relevance, meaning that the older generation no longer uses these words (Adams, 2009, p. 16)

The importance of the new generation has also been reviewed by Jeresano & Carretero (2022), noting that slang is the new words and phrases created by this digital generation, which are used in their daily life and are influenced by the changing culture, lifestyle, and innovations. Such terms as *lit, fomo, no cap, salty, flex, lowkey,* and many more, which mainly only members of this generation understand, are encountered online every day.

As of our knowledge, currently, there is no credible source in the literature with the most used slangs among the Gen Z generation, neither in the world nor in Latvia, therefore this paper after conducting the experiment will contribute to this matter as well.

2.3.3. Generational Marketing. After the target audience is segmented and targeted by generation, naturally each group responds to different messages on different channels. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how to approach each generation effectively using the right channels and prompts.

As assessed in an overview by Simon Kingsnorth (2022), a digital marketing expert and best-selling author, and in a publication by LaFleur (2023), an effective approach to targeting the Silent Generation involves simple and understandable language, crafting messages that emphasize family, and delivering them through traditional marketing channels. Similarly, the best practice for the Baby Boomer audience also involves traditional channels that are complemented by social media and portray educational but at the same time uncomplicated material. Generation X responds in a like manner, additionally valuing honesty, and more concentrated personal attention, which according to their preferences can be done using e-mail communication. By contrast, Millennials especially value the authenticity of the message and the social stance expressed on various digital platforms. Further, Generation Z also pays attention to the political correctness of the message delivered and prefers it to be expressed by a reliable person on one of the applications or social media. There is not much clarity about Generation Alpha, yet one thing for sure is that this group can be most easily addressed through different social media channels.

Although the choice of channel and message is only part of creating an effective communication strategy, the noticeable differences between generations highlight the need to recognize the unique characteristics of each generation to engage with them the right way.

2.3.4. Congruity Theory. Considering the versatility of language use and variations, as well as the difference in generational preferences and perceptions, it is possible to combine both

of these factors. People can see their characteristics and preferences in a wide variety of elements, from company values and causes to advertising placement, sound, and color. Accordingly, this match between brand and marketing materials as well as personal and brand materials results in better marketing efficiency.

The importance of congruency in advertising is evident across various aspects. Firstly, it has been researched that in the case of marketing strategy that focuses on bringing attention to causes, congruency between a brand and a familiar cause results in more positive attitudes towards the brand from consumers (Kim et al, 2017). Similarly in online marketing, a positive influence for re-sharing comes from the extent of congruency between online content and the brand followers page (Montaguti et al, 2023).

Moreover, location-congruent advertising, which aims to "deliver the right message to the right people at the right time' (Cho and Cheon 2004), has been proven to enhance the personal relevance of the message and increase attention to the advertisement (Ketelaar, 2017). This type of strategy also applies to the advertising placement itself, which, if located in a thematically appropriate context or in a congruent environment, is more likely to be recognizable and remain in the consumer's memory (Simola et al, 2013). As for the weight of advertisers or influencers on marketing strategy's success, several authors have highlighted the positive effects of congruence between the brand and the celebrity. This factor of consistent and common characteristics is perceived to be as important as the likability of the influencer (Korchia et al, 2012).

Within the realm of music, several researchers have found the importance of using appropriate music in advertisements or in other words the significance of congruent music that compliments the base message of an advertisement (MacInnis & Park, 1991). A study by Lalwani et al (2009) supports this finding by presenting how culturally relevant music, if matched properly, can enhance the understanding and perception of the message of the visual material. Following the thought of creative element congruency in advertisements, the color context is also of great importance. Previous research shows that if the colors in the ads are in harmony with the text, i.e. there is a congruence between the colors and the text, the perception and recognition of the advertisement are improved (Zhang et al, 2019).

Summarizing the available literature on the importance of an alignment between various marketing materials, it can be concluded that maintaining congruency proves to be a crucial factor in optimizing the effectiveness of advertising across diverse platforms and strategies.

2.4. Hypothesis Formulation

It is clear that personalization and language usage are of great importance in shaping marketing efficiency. The available literature has also looked at the most suitable channels and content for different generations that marketers can use to communicate efficiently. However, little is known about the most appropriate use of language or the congruity theory in language, and it is a particularly new topic among the new generation.

This study aims to contribute to this gap by looking into Generation Z's perception of slang in marketing materials which would help companies to understand whether they should go as far as including such an odd language element to attract this target audience.

Keeping in mind previous research on the wide opportunities for language modification, particularly the favorable consumer reactions to slogans following the inclusion of various linguistic instruments, which are enhanced if they are tailored to different audience characteristics, we put forward the following first hypotheses:

H_1: The inclusion of Gen Z slang in the ad (personalized communication practices/generational segmentation) positively affects the attitudes and engagement of young consumers toward advertisements.

Furthermore, considering the available generational research, Generation Z is characterized as the most environmentally and socially conscious generation compared to previous generations. Based on this generation's noticeable preference for green products and services, as well as the increasing number of young activists, they should be addressed by marketing materials whose messages invite them to be a part of the solution, consequently, our second hypothesis is as follows:

H_2: The invitation to take action and be a part of the solution positively affects the attitudes and engagement of young consumers toward advertisements.

Finally, based on the importance of target audiences and personalization we can expect that the effect of changing some language elements, namely including slang, will be different for different audiences or generations. The congruity theory, which holds that customers favor businesses they perceive to have traits similar to their personalities, may explain why the differences may be even more pronounced. In our experiment that would mean that people who use slang would see an advertisement with slang more appealing and personal. Therefore our third hypothesis is the following:

H_3: The effect of positive attitude and engagement towards the advertisement is stronger for consumers who use Gen Z slang in their daily language.

3. The Campaign

3.1. WKND

WKND, founded in 2015, is a highly recognized advertising and strategic agency working on projects for different leading companies in Latvia and in the Baltics. The company has been acknowledged by the Financial Times, including it in the list of 1000 fastest-growing entities in Europe in 2019. The biggest projects in the WKND portfolio are associated with well-known brands such as Bite, Elektrum, Virši, Galleria Riga, Madara Cosmetics, City of Liepāja, and others (WKND, n.d.).

From the company's organizational point of view, the team consists of more than 30 employees who work in four categories - creatives, project managers, strategists, and animators. Apart from strategic thinking and creative ideas, the services provided by this agency are very broad. From integrated brand image campaigns, sales promotion campaigns, strategic and creative consultations to new product development consultations and many more. Campaigns and brand strategies developed by WKND have won both Latvian and Baltic awards, such as the gold award in the Latvian Art Directors Club Awards Festival in the integrated campaign category (LADC, 2021), and the bronze award in the Baltic Best competition in the print/outdoor craft category (Reiter, 2023).

In addition to providing services to their clients, WKND annually compiles a review of consumer lifestyle trends ("Tendences"), as well as a review of the Latvian marketing environment ("LMVA"). These research results can be used by marketing experts as well as companies in various industries.

3.2. Latvian Fund for Nature

The client of the campaign created by the WKND agency used in our research is the Latvian Fund for Nature and its main message is about organizing nature and climate-friendly events. The main idea behind the campaign slogan "Party animal against your will" is that people enjoy celebrations and parties, but they should be done in such a way that animals do not become a part of the party against their will because of the trash left behind. This is a topical issue among environmentalists and to make the message noticeable to the public it is presented with witty

language, familiar personalities, attractive visuals, and concise videos (WKND, n.d.). The campaign materials can be found in Appendix D.

It is this approach, creative and a bit humorous promotion of a serious and important topic, that expands the field of research of our work. By studying how Gen Z evaluates slang in this specific environmentally friendly campaign, we will also find out how they perceive messages about environmental topics.

Research shows that Gen Z truly is the generation that is most worried about global warming and believes they can impact the future of the world by being environmentally conscious (Lcsw & Gillespie, 2021). This means that messages in marketing materials that include environmental issues and a call to be a part of the solution would appeal to this audience. Posts about this topic, along with other social issues, on social platforms, especially on TikTok, dominate among this audience by members of this generation actively creating discussions and raising awareness (Paoletti, 2022).
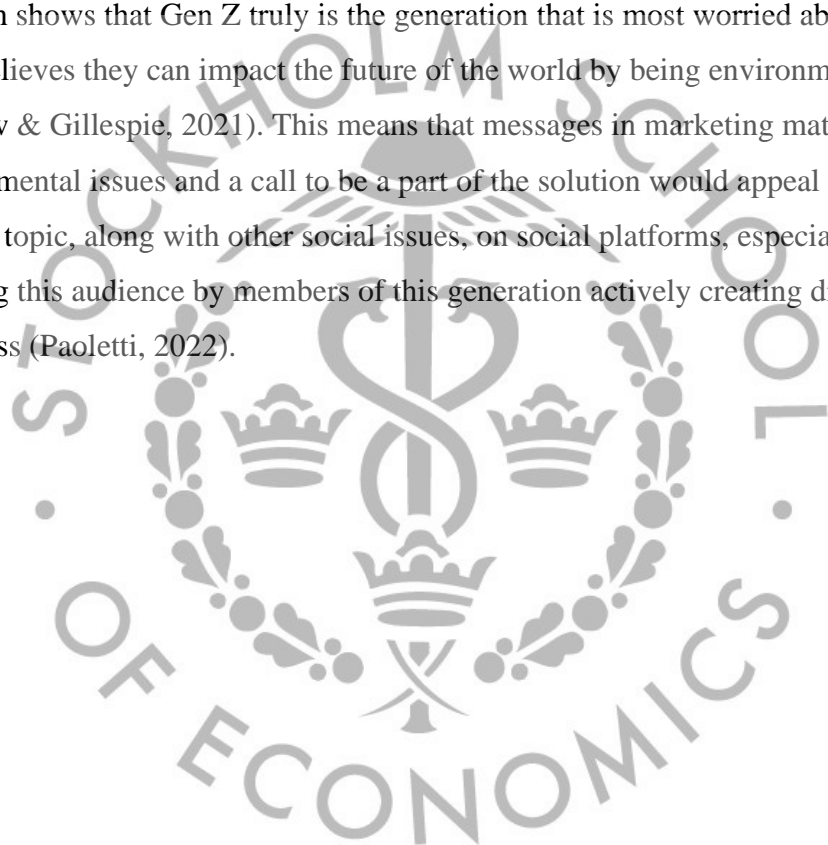
4. Methodology

4.1. Research purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine how the inclusion of generation-specific slangs in marketing campaign slogans affects the emotional appeal, engagement, and familiarity of the ad amongst the Gen Z audience. For this to be done, this study used an approach adapted from the work of Walrave et al. (2018), who ran an experiment to see how users reacted to tailored social media adverts. While their research concentrated on adolescents and social media ad personalization, our research examines the effect in the context of language use in advertisements, specifically - the effect of slang usage. Similar to their experiment, this study used the approach of different types of personalization presented to different groups of people. This work used advertisements adapted from the WKND agency's marketing campaigns done in 2022 (see Appendix D).

4.2. Sample description

The chosen population was Generation Z defined by Tapscott (2008), specifically a group aged 18 to 26 years old. According to Walrave et al. (2018) and Goldsmith & Freiden (2004), younger individuals respond more favorably to tailored ads, therefore they can be considered as the ideal audience for this experiment. Lastly, the provided advertisement in the experiment is on environmental issues, and according to Forbes (2021), the environment and its protection are Gen Z's number one concern.

Our initial goal was to reach a sample size of approximately 300 valid respondents, with 100 within each group.

4.3. Research strategy and design

4.3.1. Experiment. We performed an online between-subject experiment to test the effect of generation-relevant communication (slang usage) in advertisements on the effectiveness and appeal towards the ad. The experimental method is a technique that entails doing research in an impartial, controlled manner to guarantee that precision is maximized and that accurate inferences may be drawn on a hypothesis (Bell, 2009).

To test our hypothesis and answer the research questions, we designed an experiment in the form of an online survey. Because Qualtrics allows basic customization and randomization, it was selected as the platform for conducting the study. We distributed the survey amongst friends and peers, using our own connections and the network of SSE Riga, as well as posted the link in corresponding Facebook groups and on the Reddit platform to create exposure to a bigger Gen Z audience. The survey was distributed between February and March of 2024. Moreover, the survey was not translated into Latvian not only due to the advertising materials and slogans being in English but also the fact that the majority of Gen Z slangs generally and all of our chosen slangs for the experiment are in English.

To get an insight into the most used slangs within the Gen Z audience, we did a pretest to survey our target audience and collected a list of the most used slangs in their daily language, which we further implemented in our main experiment.

Pretest

Since there is no given list of the most used Generation Z slangs as of now, we created a pre-test with a methodology developed by Lytle et al. (1998) to guarantee the validity of the measurements for the experiment. A brief introduction of the study was presented to the participants at the beginning of the questionnaire, during which they were told about the study and that they would be asked to provide their answers on two items related to Gen Z slangs. First of all, participants answered the following question: (1) "Do you use slang in your daily language?" Next, participants were asked to select the most used slangs in their daily language from 7 presented options, such as *lit, lowkey, stan,* and *slay.* Additionally, the age of the respondents was asked in the survey, because we wanted to research the effect on Generation Z, thus any other respondent in a different age group was eliminated. The pre-test allowed us to generate a list of the most used slangs, which were after used in the slogans for the experiment. A summary of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

Experiment: Method and Procedure

First, participants were introduced with a description of the campaign and the purpose of the advertisement. After reading the introduction, participants were assigned randomly to one of the three conditions of an advertisement without slang, an ad with a slogan including Gen Z slang, and an ad with a slogan including Gen Z slang, and an additional call to be a part of the solution by taking action (Figure 1). As a stimulus, we used slogans from a "Dabas Fonds" marketing campaign, which was made and presented by the WKND agency in 2022 (Appendix D). Consequently, the materials were already created and provided to us, with a few alterations done by the agency, based on our research needs.

| Advertisement used for the control group | Advertisement used for the first treatment group | Advertisement used for the second treatment group |

Figure 1: Advertisements used in the experiment. Visuals made by the WKND agency in collaboration with the authors.

The slogan for the control group was a simplified version of the original slogan made by the WKND agency: *Party the right way. Party so that nothing is left behind in the nature (*Figure E.1*).* This advertisement is originally targeted for the younger audience, thus the slogan will not be changed and will be shown as it is, exposing respondents to an ad they would see on any billboard, social media platforms, TV, etc. Nevertheless, there will be added a different level component for the experimental groups.

The slogan for the first treatment group was a slogan with Gen Z slang - content that is relatable to them personally. Tam & Ho (2006), indicate that self-referent messages in an advertisement, in this case a slang, have a high chance of strongly influencing the consumer's content recall, intention to buy, and one's assessment. Furthermore, a study done by McKinsey & Company (2018), indicates that the concept of expressing one's unique personality and authenticity speaks closely with the Generation Z, and language expressions being one of the components. Using the results from the pre-test, we gathered mostly used slangs amongst the Gen-Z audience, and accordingly, chose the slang that was going to be included in our slogans, which is "Hits different". Therefore, the slogan for the first treatment group is as follows: *"Partying the right way hits different: Party so that nothing is left behind in the nature." (*Figure E.2.)

The slogan for the second treatment group was a slogan that, in addition to the slang, also includes an invitation to be a part of the solution. As the ad itself indirectly assesses the environmental issue, we include an additional call to be a part of the sustainable community, in the words which are often found in many environmental organizations' communication materials (e.g., Fridays for Future, etc.): *Being part of positive change hits different. Party so that nothing is left behind in the nature* (Figure E.3). According to a recent Pew Research study (2021), younger generation stands out for their high levels of engagement with the climate change issue, and 32% of Gen Zers have taken at least one of the four actions (donating money, contacting an elected official, volunteering, or attending a rally) to help address climate change. In comparison, only 23% of Gen X has participated in those actions, while Baby Boomers and older adults show only a 21% participation rate. Hence, we can conclude that this slogan resonates even more deeply with the Gen Z audience. A summary of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

Lastly, a manipulation check at the end of the survey was done to ensure that participants were able to recognize the inclusion of slang in the advertising slogans presented during the experiment. This check is vital to confirm that the manipulation of incorporating slang was noticeable and comprehensible to the participants. At the end of the survey, participants were asked the manipulation check question and a list of options to choose from: "What slang was

included in the message?" An in-detail discussion of manipulation check can be found in Section 4.3.2.

  4.3.2. Manipulation check. The last question in the survey is intended to check whether the participant was aware that the advertising slogan contained a slang. According to Hoewe (2017), if a manipulation check succeeds, the researcher can determine that participants correctly perceived, interpreted, or responded to the stimulus. From there, more precise conclusions about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables can be made. However, the discussion about whether to remove participants from the sample who fail the manipulation check is contradictory and inconclusive. Some authors (Kotzian, et al., 2020; Bem, 2003; Aronow, et al., 2019) argue that manipulation checks can result in Type I errors and reduce the efficiency of randomization, hence not recommending the removal of participants from the sample. Conversely, excluding those who did not pass the check might be justifiable if the manipulation's success is crucial to answering the research question and the study's design primarily depends on a precise comprehension of the manipulation (Pedulla, 2014; Tan&Yates, 1995). Additionally, the sample size is fairly limited, thus retaining participants who clearly did not perceive the manipulation can weaken the study's power and dilute its overall effect (Kane & Barabas, 2018).

  After considering all the arguments, however, we have opted to not exclude participants who have failed the manipulation check in our main preliminary analysis, to avoid selection bias and ensure accurate and precise results. Yet, we still provide the results with the exclusion of the participants who did not pass the test in our detailed analysis, as we believe these results are still valuable and account for the effect for a group that fully understood the manipulation.

4.4. Experiment

  4.4.1. Measures. Dependent variables were adapted from several previous works focusing on marketing methods and consumer perception of advertisements. Attitudes toward created slogans were measured with five dependent variables - 1) emotional appeal, 2) ad engagement, 3) self-congruity, 4) value orientation, and 5) the use of slogans. Emotional appeal toward the advertisement, adapted from Batra & Holbrook (1990), was assessed by seven items measured on 7-point bipolar evaluation scores such as "not at all entertained/very entertained",

"not at all humorous/very humorous", and "not at all impressed/very impressed". The components were then averaged and combined to create a single, reliable emotional appeal index, which will be one of our dependent variables.

The engagement of the *Dabas Fonds* ad was adapted from the work of Zaichkowsky (1985) and assessed by three items on 7-point bipolar evaluation scores: "useful/useless", "relevant/irrelevant", and "exciting/unexciting". It was further followed by a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all likely, 7 = extremely likely): "How likely are you to visit the *Climate Game* website?" We averaged and combined these items in an ad engagement index.

Further, the self-congruity, adapted from Confente et al. (2020), was assessed by two following statements: "The message portrayed in the advertisement represents the type of person I aspire to be," and "It feels like I'm the right audience for this advertisement." on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Consequently, both items were averaged and combined in order to create a self-congruity index.

Lastly, to measure the value orientation, we used an approach adapted from Lee et al. (2014), where respondents were asked about their intention to change their values and behavior after seeing the advertisement: "I am planning to keep the surrounding environment clean," measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

The second part - usage of the slogans - was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = often): "How often do you use slangs (e.g., *slay*, *lowkey*, *lit*) in your daily language?".

4.4.2. Choice of the model. ANOVA. We employ SPSS for ANOVA for data analysis. This type of analysis is used to compare means across several test groups and is the model of choice for examining mean differences across three or more groups. According to Bevans (2020), the null hypothesis of an ANOVA is that there are no differences among any of the means.

Using a one-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVA), the effects of personalized communication on the specified dependent variables were examined. This research had one independent variable - personalized messaging - and four dependent variables - emotional appeal, ad engagement, self-congruity, and value orientation. Four different ANOVA analyses were performed, using the independent variable and each of the four dependent

variables. Following the initial ANOVA testing, post-hoc tests were then used to determine the differences between certain groups (Shaw & Mitchell-Olds, 1993).

ANCOVA. A one-way ANCOVA analysis was also carried out to control for the frequency of slang usage variable and ascertain if then the personalized messaging had any effect on the emotional appeal, ad engagement, self-congruity, and value orientation.

PROCESS macro regression. PROCESS Macro Regression (Model 1) analysis developed by Hayes, et al. (2017) was additionally done to reveal on what level does the moderator variable (frequency of slang usage) condition the relationship between the level of personalized messaging and the dependent variables.

Correlation analysis. A measure of the strength and direction of the association between two variables evaluated on at least one interval scale is called Pearson's correlation. As a result, we used a Pearson's correlation to ascertain whether respondents' frequency of the slang usage and their perception of the advertisement are related. A line of maximum fit between data from two variables is attempted to be created via Pearson's correlation, and the distance between data points and this line of greatest fit is shown by the Pearson correlation coefficient, or r (Laerd Statistics, n.d.).

5. *Analysis of results*

This section summarizes the findings of the empirical part of our research. We present the survey sample and do a statistical analysis of the results.

5.1. Pre-test results

For the selection of the slang that could be used for the main experiment by adding it to the advertisements shown for two treatment groups, a pretest that would select the most used slangs by young people in the territory of Latvia was crucial. We collected 179 responses from the pre-test survey, from which nine were discarded due to being incomplete, which left us with 170 responses.
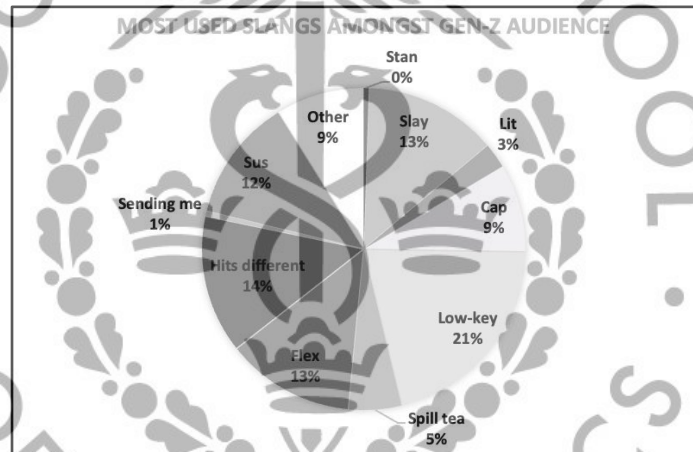

Figure 2: The most used slangs amongst Gen Z audience. The chart was created by the authors.

After determining the most used slangs, we chose the most suitable one from the top 3, which would fit the campaign of the Latvian Nature Foundation in both content and phonetic context which was *hits different*. This slang is an appropriate addition to the slogan "Party the right way", because the meaning of *hits different* is that something is better than usual. Accordingly, "Partying the right way hits different" means that partying the right way, or in the case of this campaign, partying without leaving anything behind in nature, is better than leaving trash.

Main analysis

In our main analysis we include all of the participants who completed the survey and were within our target age group.

5.2. Sample description

The sample consists of 454 participants, from which incomplete answers and people out of our target age (16 to 26 years old) were removed. The remaining sample consists of 301 responses. The respondents were randomly allocated to the treatment groups by the Qualtrics platform, which used its built-in features, securing accurate randomization of the sample. In terms of gender distribution, women make up the majority of the sample (66.4%), with men contributing 32.9% of all replies. Three people who identify as different genders and those who prefer not to disclose their gender make up the remaining 0.7%. Regarding the distribution of responses under the different conditions within the survey, the control group received 99 responses, the slang received 98 and the slang & call group consisted of 102 responses.

5.3. Analysis of the Variance (ANOVA)

A one-way between-groups analysis of the variance (ANOVA) with the level of personalized messaging as an independent variable and emotional appeal, ad engagement, self-congruity and value orientation as dependent variables were conducted to test our hypothesis and investigate how respondents' opinions of the given advertisement were impacted by personalized messaging.

The results of the analysis show that the level of personalized messaging that the respondents were exposed to have no significant effect on the ad engagement (F (2,296) = 1.739, p = .177). However, this analysis revealed a significant effect among emotional appeal (F (2,296) = 3.081, p = .047, η^2 = .020), self-congruity (F (2,296) = 5.302, p = .005, η^2 = .035) and value orientation (F (2,296) = 3.495, p = .032, η^2 = .023).

		M	SD	p-value
	Control group	4.43	1.09	
Emotional Appeal	Slang	4.75	1.27	0.047
	Slang & call	4.77	1.01	

Table 2. One-way ANOVA with emotional appeal index as a dependent variable. Table created by authors.

		M	SD	p-value
	Control group	4.99	1.22	
Ad engagement	Slang	5.17	1.13	0.177
	Slang & Call	5.28	0.99	

Table 3. One-way ANOVA with ad engagement index as a dependent variable. Table created by authors.

		M	SD	p-value
	Control group	4.28	1.21	
Self-congruity	Slang	4.83	1.35	0.005
	Slang & call	4.76	1.32	

Table 4. One-way ANOVA with self-congruity index as a dependent variable. Table created by authors.

		M	SD	p-value
	Control group	5.95	1.31	
Value orientation	Slang	6.23	0.91	0.032
	Slang & call	6.31	0.78	

Table 5. One-way ANOVA with value orientation as a dependent variable. Table created by authors.

We then performed ANCOVA analysis, using the usage of slogans as a covariate to other dependent variables to see whether it affects the results. A summary of the ANCOVA analysis is found in Table 6.

Dependent variable	F value (2,295)	p-value	partial η2
Emotional appeal	2.84	0.06	0.019
Ad engagement	1.526	0.219	0.01
Self-congruity	4.931	0.008	0.032
Value orientation	3.712	0.026	0.025

Table 6. One-way ANCOVA with the dependent variables and usage of slogans as covariates. Table created by authors.

Interestingly, once the effect is "statistically controlled" for the frequency of the slang usage, the results reveal a significant effect only for two variables - self-congruity and value orientation instead of three. Thus, as the findings of both ANOVA and ANCOVA analysis are partially inconsistent in terms of significant variables, we employ Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test to ascertain whether modifications within the self-congruity and value perception vary from the control.

Self-congruity				95% CI	
	Condition	p-value	Mean difference	Lower bound	Upper bound
Control	Slang	0.004	-0.534*	-0.896	-0.172
	Slang & call to action	0.013	-0.456*	1.03	0.734

Table 7. LSD test with the control group as a benchmark. Table created by authors.

Value orientation				95% CI	
	Condition	p-value	Mean difference	Lower bound	Upper bound
Control	Slang	0.046	-0.293*	-0.580	-0.005
	Slang & call to action	0.010	-0.377*	-0.662	-0.092

Table 8. LSD test with the control group as a benchmark. Table created by authors.

The LSD test findings suggest that both - slang and slang & call to action groups differ considerably from the control group in terms of the self-congruity index, indicating a significant difference. In other words, based on the results in Table 7, there is a significant difference between the control group (M = 4.23, SD = 0.130) and the slang (M = 4.83, SD = 0.130) and slang & call to action group (M = 4.75, SD = 0.128) in terms of self-congruity. The same applies to the value orientation variable where the significant difference is again observed between the control group (M = 5.94, SD = 0.103), and the slang group (M = 6.24, SD = 0.103), as well as slang & call to action group (M = 6.32, SD = 0.101). The results are summarized in Table 8.

5.4. Correlation analysis

We then performed a correlation analysis to see how the dependent variables and frequency of the slang usage are related to one other. No significant correlation with any of the variables was found in the control group. Nevertheless, a weak positive correlation was found with self-congruity in the slang group (r = .236, n = 98, p = .019), thus explaining 5.57% of self-congruity variance, as well as with ad engagement in the slang & call to action group (r = .235, n = 102, p = .018), explaining 5.52% of ad engagement variance.

Condition = slang

	M	SD	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Pearson correlation
Self-congruity	4.83	1.35				
Frequency	3.44	1.05	0.019	0.039	0.415	0.236*

Table 10: Correlation analysis of self-congruity with frequency of slang usage in the slang group. Table created by the authors.

Condition = slang & call to action

	M	SD	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Pearson correlation
Ad engagement	5.28	0.99				
Frequency	3.54	1.01	0.018	0.042	0.410	0.235*

Table 11: Correlation analysis of ad engagement with frequency of slang usage in the slang & call to action group. Table created by the authors.

Supplementary analysis

In our supplementary analysis we removed those participants who failed the manipulation check, to be exact - did not recognize a slang in the slogan of the advertisement, when they were assigned to one of the treatment groups.

5.5. Sample description

The sample of only participants who passed the manipulation check consists of 232 respondents. Similarly, women make up the majority of the sample (66.4%), with men contributing 33.6% of all replies. Regarding the distribution of responses under the different conditions within the survey, the control group received 99 responses, the slang received 67 and the slang & call group consisted of 65 responses.

5.6. Analysis of the variance (ANOVA)

The one-way between groups ANOVA shows similar results as in the main analysis, except now the results of the analysis implied that the level of personalized messaging that the respondents were exposed to had a significant effect on all of the dependent variables and on a much higher level - emotional appeal ($F_{(2,228)}$ = 5.942, p = .003, η^2 = .050), ad engagement ($F_{(2,228)}$ = 3.673, p = .027, η^2 = .031), self-congruity ($F_{(2,228)}$ = 6.791, p = .001, η^2 = .056) and value orientation ($F_{(2,228)}$ = 6.073, p = .003, η^2 = .051), instead of just three. A summary of the results can be found in Table 12.

Dependent variable	M	SD	p-value
Emotional appeal	4.69	1.09	0.003
Ad engagement	5.21	1.10	0.027
Self-congruity	4.63	1.30	0.001
Value orientation	6.20	1.03	0.003

Table 12. One-way ANOVA with the dependent variables and the condition as a factor. Table created by authors.

5.7. PROCESS macro regression

As the interaction effect in ANOVA was found significant for the emotional appeal index variable, we conducted a PROCESS macro regression analysis to see on what level the relationship between the level of personalized messaging and the emotional appeal variable was influenced by the moderator variable (the frequency of slang usage). Using PROCESS model 1 with emotional appeal as a dependent variable and frequency as a moderator revealed a significant interaction effect (β = .1964, p = <0.001), as expected. Additionally, using the Johnson-Neyman technique, it showed the Johnson-Neyman point where the frequency has a significant effect on emotional appeal occurs above the level of frequency 2.98 (mean-centered), which represents 54.54% of the values.

5.8. Correlation analysis

Lastly, we repeatedly performed a correlation analysis to see how the dependent variables and frequency of the slang usage are related to one another in the detailed analysis group. While still no significant correlation with any of the variables was found in the control group, this time we found notably more significant correlations with the variables in the treatment groups. Firstly, a weak positive correlation was found with the emotional appeal (r = .278, n = 67, p = .023), as well as self-congruity (r = .220, n = 67, p = .004), in the slang group. Consequently, the frequency of slang usage explained 7.7% of emotional appeal variance and 5% of the variance of self-congruity. Additionally, a moderately strong correlation was observed with emotional appeal (r = .356, n = 65, p = .004), ad engagement (r = .469, n = 65, p = <.001), and self-congruity (r = .300, n = 65, p = .015) in the slang & call to action treatment group. Hence, frequency explained 12.7% of emotional appeal variance, 22% of ad engagement variance, and 9% of self-congruity variance.

Condition = slang

	M	SD	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Pearson correlation
Emotional appeal	4.79	1.02				
Frequency	3.52	0.93	0.023	0.041	0.486	0.278*
Self-congruity	5.20	1.00				
Frequency	3l.52	1.03	0.036	0.015	0.407	0.220*

Table 13: Correlation analysis of emotional appeal and self-congruity with frequency of slang usage in the slogan group. Graph created by the authors.

Condition = slang & call to action

	M	SD	p-value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Pearson correlation
Emotional appeal	4.99	0.99				
Frequency	3.51	0.97	0.004	0.122	0.552	0.356**
Ad engagement	5.43	0.99				
Frequency	3.51	0.97	<0.001	0.254	0.639	0.469**
Self-congruity	4.78	1.41				
Frequency	3.51	0.97	0.015	0.061	0.507	0.300*

Table 14: Correlation analysis of emotional appeal, ad engagement and self-congruity with frequency of slang usage in the slang & call to action group. Table created by the authors.

6. Discussion

This research paper, as of our awareness, offers the first investigation of how slang and slang & action-minded inclusion in advertising slogans influence ad effectiveness and perception, and additionally whether the frequency of slang usage also has some effect on these measures.

Main analysis

Our research paper finds supporting evidence that customer attitudes toward an advertisement are impacted by the choice of words used in slogans - especially if they are out of the ordinary (Kim & Kim, 2012; McQuarrie et al., 2009). Our chosen target audience (Gen Z) and used words (slang) also support existing research on personalization, which, if incorporated into an advertisement, as suggested by Han et al. (2018) and McKinsey & Company (2021), leads to positive consumer reactions. More specifically, we find a significant difference between control and treatment groups in terms of emotional appeal, self-congruity, and value orientation. We, therefore, provide evidence that when evaluating the slogan and advertising as a whole, Gen Z is notably addressed by including their own frequently used language phenomenon slang. Further, it also suggests that directly asking the participants to be part of the solution also does promote this generation's engagement towards advertisements.

The previous literature indicates that consumer responses to slogans that incorporate multiple linguistic instruments, especially if they are customized to the specific features of the target group, are perceived as favorable (Tam & Ho, 2006; McKinsey & Company, 2018), and as the results of our experiment prove the same, we accept the H_1 (*H$_1$: The inclusion of Gen Z slang in the ad (personalized communication practices/generational segmentation) positively affects the attitudes and engagement of young consumers toward advertisements).* Our research showed that young people's opinions of various ad types when they included a personalization element (slang), differed significantly across the groups. Furthermore, the existing generational studies suggest that Generation Z is considered to be the most socially and environmentally concerned generation to date, and marketing materials encouraging them to contribute to the solution are perceived as more appealing and relevant by this generation (Dabija et al., 2019; Meehan, 2016) - all of which is also proven in our study, thus we accept the H_2 (*H$_2$: The invitation to take action*

and be a part of the solution positively affects the attitudes and engagement of young consumers toward advertisements.)

The frequency of slang usage by the participants can be closely tied with the self-congruity theory, and despite the previous literature demonstrating that congruity theory is one of the reasons why customers choose brands they believe to have characteristics comparable to their own personalities, and the opinion of a brand are more positively impacted when the customer is congruent with a recognized cause (e.g., slang) (Kim et al., 2017; Sirgy, 1982; Baker at al., 2020; Dodoo & Wen, 2019), the results of the main experiment rejected H_3 (*H₃: The effect of positive attitude and engagement towards the advertisement is stronger for consumers who use Gen Z slang in their daily language).*

Nevertheless, we observed a positive correlation on two dependent variables toward the frequency of using slang in some cases. According to the correlation analysis, when the score of frequency increases, so do the scores on ad engagement and self-congruity indexes. Additionally, using ANCOVA analysis we were able to demonstrate some level of the causative relationship of frequency on the dependent variables.

Supplementary analysis

When removing participants who did not pass manipulation check, we observe a much stronger statistically significant difference across the groups in the first ANOVA analysis, and additionally, now on all the dependent variables, about the respondent's opinions of advertisements when they included the personalization element, hence the acceptance of the first and second hypothesis becomes even more valid.

Secondly, in the supplementary ANOVA with interaction term we find that the frequency of slang usage has significant effect on the emotional appeal index, meaning that the more frequent the respondent uses slang in their daily language, the more emotionally appealed he is towards the advertisement. We further confirm this with the PROCESS macro regression and observe a strengthening effect as the level of the moderator variable increases. Such finding on some level proves the above-mentioned self-congruity theory that the respondent feels stronger emotional attraction towards the ad if it resonates with their character, thus we can partially accept the third hypothesis. Consequently, because it corresponds to their cultural norms and

beliefs, people who frequently use Gen Z slang may have a deeper feeling of connection with advertisements that use similar language (Baker et al., 2020; Adams, 2009), thus we can now partially accept the third hypothesis.

Additionally, the correlation analysis now shows more and higher significance positive correlations between the dependent variables and the frequency of the slang usage.

In general, the findings of both analyses reveal the complex relationship between language use, generational characteristics, and how customers respond to advertising. Additionally, given that our sample size is large enough and includes young consumers who make up the target group, we think that our findings may be broadly applied.

6.1. Limitations and recommendations for future research

In the process of writing this paper and conducting the experiment, there were several limitations that could potentially affect the results, therefore they could be seen as plausible areas for further research.

The first research limitation emerged during the data collection process, which took place via Qualtrics, thus making the participants realize that they are taking part in a study, which can create a social desirability bias and the desire to answer in a way that aligns with the studies expectations. In the further research, the results could differ if the experiment were conducted in a more natural setting, for example using sponsored ads.

Secondly, the methodology of this research assumes that the respondents, who fall into the age group of 16-26 years are considered as Gen Z, and a common conclusion is made about them. However, this approach has two shortcomings. The studied age window is wide enough for the opinions of the participants to differ, so this research could be further improved by studying narrower age groups. Further, although the survey was intentionally sent out using different channels with the intention to collect as many different respondents as possible, the age of the participants is not equally distributed. Since the most active participants were from SSE Riga, the age gap with the most answers is from 19 to 22 years. An additional factor that could be looked into in further research, is how the attitudes differ considering other factors other than age, such as education, location, interests, etc.

Thirdly, the marketing material used was a poster with visualizations that could be considered humorous and targeted to young consumers, which could influence the appeal of the

ad. Moreover, the fact that as many as 69 participants from the first and second treatment groups did not notice the slang, indicates that the visuals used perhaps distracted them from the slang. Consequently, in the further research different results could be made by conducting an experiment that does not contain any visual materials.

Finally, this research used one very specific campaign. Since the focus of the campaign is on environmental issues, it would be incorrect to generalize conclusions about the slogan's effectiveness. Since the suitability of slang within slogans depends on both brand identity and the content of the campaign, this limitation recommends that in future research with an experiment that includes different brands and campaigns, the results could change.

7. Conclusion

To create marketing materials that are engaging and effective, it is necessary to speak to the right audience using the right language in the right manner. It is shown that advertisements with personalized elements have the power to significantly change how the consumer perceives and reacts to them as well as their choice of products. The increased appeal is sparked by the relevancy, and the advertisement becomes a focused message that speaks to the viewer's interests, background, and identity. Nevertheless, the generational differences in the personalized elements, and the usage of them in marketing is yet a comparatively new field of interest. While the total purchasing power will soon consist mostly of Generation Z consumers, marketers still struggle to identify the generation-specific elements to use for attracting this audience. This paper examines Generation Z perception of slang and whether it could be an additional tool, used to attract this generation amongst other tools from the existing literature like creating a slogan concise, engaging, and authentic (Southgate, 2017). The experiment showed a statistically significant effect of including a personalized messaging element on the respondents' answers, indicating that their perception of regular advertisements and personalized messaging was essentially different. It also presented partial evidence of the positive relationship between the frequency of using slang and the emotional appeal towards the ad. We suggest that slang is a tool worth considering to improve marketing effectiveness, which is a new discovery within the marketing industry. This research is valuable for marketers and businesses, who are trying to address the younger generation through their advertisements and slogans. The work also provides general insights for the marketing industry as a whole, as it gives valuable results on the people's perceptions of generation-specific personalized messaging included in advertisements.

Considering the reviewed literature and the results of the thesis, it still has great potential for the further research, because the results could change significantly if the nature of experiment, advertisement chosen, and studied factors of the participants were changed.

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Acknowledgement of AI use

9. Appendices

Appendix A. Linguistic elements used in advertising from TIME magazine

Individual Linguistic Feature	Category	Number of Individual Occurrences	Number of Overall Occurrences
Acronym	Semantics	0	2
Affixation	Morphology	3	3
Alliteration	Phonetics	13	23
Blending	Morphology	0	5
Contradiction	Semantics	3	5
Converseness	Semantics	5	11
Expression	Semantics	4	22
Metaphor	Semantics	12	13
Paronomasia	Semantics	10	23
Repetition	Morphology	4	19
Rhyming	Phonology	2	8
Same MOA	Phonetics	0	2
Simile	Semantics	1	3
Word Coinage	Semantics	2	7

Figure A.1: Distribution of the 14 Individual Linguistic Features. Proctor, L. (2013). Retrieved from:
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Appendix B. Questions used in the pretest

- Do you use slangs in you daily language?
- Please pick three of most used slangs in your daily language [multiple choice drop-down list]
    - Lit
    - Flex
    - Stan
    - Cap
    - Low-key
    - Sip tea
    - L
    - Hits different
    - Sending me
    - Sus

- Please pick three of the most used slangs among your peers [asked if answer "No" to the question "Do you use slang in your daily language?]
  - Lit
  - Flex
  - Stan
  - Cap
  - Low-key
  - Sip tea
  - L
  - Hits different
  - Sending me
  - Sus

Appendix C. Questions used in the experiment

Before seeing the ad:

- Please select your gender:
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other
  - Prefer not to say
- What is your age? [drop-down list from 18 to 26]

Questions after seeing the ad:

- Please rate your overall reaction to the advertisement by the following qualifications: (7-point bipolar scale)
  - I felt not at all entertained/very entertained
  - I felt not at all unimpressed/very impressed
  - I felt not at all humorous/very humorous
  - I felt not at all delighted/very delighted
  - I felt not at all benefited/very benefited

● Please rate your overall impression about the advertisement you just saw: (7-point bipolar scale)

- ○ Useful/Useless
- ○ Relevant/Irrelevant
- ○ Exciting/Unexciting

● Please, briefly in your own words, explain what you think the advertisement was about.

● How likely are you to visit the *Climate Game* website? (1 - extremely unlikely, 5 - extremely likely)

● Please rate the following statement (7-point Likert scale, 1 - totally disagree, 7 - totally agree)

- ○ The message portrayed in the advertisement represents the type of person I aspire to be
- ○ I am planning to keep the surrounding environment clean
- ○ This advertisement feels familiar

● How often do you use slang (e.g., *slay*, *lowkey*, *lit*) in your daily language? (1 - never, 5 - always)

● What slang was included in the message of the advertisement?

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Figure E.1: Advertisement used for the control group.

Figure E.2: Advertisement used for the first treatment group

Figure E.3: Advertisement used for the second treatment group