



## Human Versus Corporate Tone of Voice: Which one Performs Better in The Telecommunication Industry?

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### Abstract

*This research delves into the nuanced impact of human and corporate tones of voice on perceived social presence, trust, and customer satisfaction, contrasting the communication strategies between the human tone of the voice-centric brand (HCB) and corporate tone of the voice-centric brand (CCB), two notable brands in the Indonesian market. Using the PLS-MGA technique, the study offers detailed insights into the real-world implications of these tones through two distinct case studies. Findings reveal a marked difference between HCB and CCB concerning the influence of tone on perceived social presence. HCB's human tone resonates more with customers, creating a pronounced positive impact, while CCB's corporate tone also has a positive but lesser influence. In shaping customer trust, the human tone in HCB stands out. However, when it comes to satisfaction, only HCB's human tone remains influential, with CCB's corporate tone not manifesting a significant effect. The study further underscores the nuanced role of perceived social presence as a mediator in the relationship between tone of voice, trust, and satisfaction. An essential takeaway is that while the human tone is often lauded for its benefits, it is only sometimes suitable. Industries prioritizing professionalism and expertise might need a balanced approach between human and corporate tones. The findings, especially contextualized within the two Indonesian network providers, emphasize the necessity of recognizing and catering to diverse customer expectations.*

**Keywords:** Multi-Group Analysis, Satisfaction, Social Presence, Tone of Voice, Trust

### INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancement of technology over the past few decades, our society has seen a significant shift in where they spend much of their time-digital environments, especially the internet and social media platforms. These platforms, once a novelty, have become integral parts of our daily lives. Such platforms are not just for personal interactions but have evolved into a powerful medium for businesses and their customers. Recognizing the potential of these platforms, numerous companies, regardless of size and industry, have made a conscious effort to establish a solid online presence, especially on popular social media platforms.

This digital shift has multiple implications. It has redefined how businesses promote their brands, products, or services, aiming to connect with their clientele in more personal and engaging ways. Gone are the days when customer feedback was limited to private channels like emails or phone calls. Today,

with platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, customers have a public space to voice their grievances and opinions. Such public platforms offer clients a new platform to express their grievances, making their feedback more visible than ever (Beal, 2021; Stauss & Seidel, 2019). This transparency, while beneficial in many ways, comes with its challenges. Since complaints and feedback on social media are public and easily accessible, they require unique and immediate management. A single negative review or complaint, if not addressed promptly and adequately, can spiral into a PR nightmare, potentially leading to negative perceptions among existing and potential customers and even triggering brand-switching intentions.

Additionally, according to Review Trackers (2022), 94 percent of consumers say that positive reviews make them more likely to use a business, and 92 percent will hesitate to purchase if there are no reviews. This data highlights how critical online

feedback is to consumer trust and satisfaction, further underscoring the importance of responsive and effective social media management in today's digital landscape.

In 2023, the vast majority of marketers (93 percent) utilize social media for business, recognizing its pivotal role in reaching a global audience of approximately 4.9 billion users. These platforms not only facilitate brand exposure but also drive consumer purchasing decisions, with 76 percent of users influenced by social media when deciding to buy (Laborde, 2024). Additionally, social media is a critical platform for customer service and engagement, where prompt responses to customer inquiries and feedback can significantly affect customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Research shows that businesses engaging effectively on social media can see customers spending 20-40 percent more with them compared to those that do not (Allen, 2023).

Moreover, a solid social media presence can help businesses stay ahead of the competition, drive traffic to their websites, and improve search engine rankings. This presence also enables businesses to showcase their expertise, foster community, and humanize their brand, thereby building trust and credibility with their audience.

In this digital age, it is about more than just addressing the complaints but how they are addressed. The persona that a brand adopts in its online interactions is critically important. Such personifications or depictions on social media platforms are not trivial. They send powerful signals about the brand's values, ethos, and customer-centricity. This portrayal often hinges on how the brand handles the complaint. It is not dissimilar to interpersonal communications, where the tone and manner of response can significantly impact the outcome (Chen et al., 2015; Labrecque, 2014). Brands, recognizing this parallel, have started to personify themselves in their digital interactions. They aim to come across as communication partners similar to humans, focusing on empathy and understanding, and this is often achieved by using a more human tone of voice, even in official interactions such as addressing complaints (Hayes et al., 2022). Such digital personification strategies result in what experts term perceived social presence. This is not a new concept, though its importance has been magnified in the digital age. The idea of perceived social presence was introduced in earlier consumer studies as a means to gauge the effectiveness of online media interactions in shaping a consumer's perception of a brand, determining how real or authentic a brand feels to its customers (Jeong et al., 2022).

Hayes et al. (2020) dove deeper into this concept, categorizing brand communication styles into two primary tones of voice. The first, the formal tone, is often called the corporate tone of voice. It is

the voice of professionalism, authority, and tradition. The second, the informal tone, is typically known as the human tone of voice. This tone is approachable, relatable, and personal, aiming to bridge the gap between businesses and customers, making interactions feel less like transactions and more like conversations. In determining which tone is more effective, Jeong et al. (2022) suggest that in the current digital landscape, the human tone of voice might have a distinct advantage. Their findings indicate that this tone is more efficient in enhancing the perceived social presence than the corporate tone of voice, especially in industries where personal touch and customer relations are paramount.

However, the importance of a brand's tone of voice continues beyond there. It is a critical component of a brand's identity, serving as a communication signal that shapes how customers perceive the brand. When done right, it crafts a brand identity that feels real and present, a brand that customers can relate to and connect with, and stands beside them as an intimate communication partner rather than a faceless entity. Such personified brand communication can foster a brand character that feels warm, enjoyable, and sociable (Chen et al., 2015; Men & Tsai, 2015). This strategy does not just enhance brand image; it contributes to a tangible sense of social presence. It creates a psychological closeness between customers and the brand, making the digital interactions more genuine and meaningful (Hayes et al., 2022).

Today's digital-savvy customers can see through inauthentic brand communications. They crave genuine interactions, and a human tone of voice leans towards fulfilling this desire. It humanizes the brand, giving the impression that behind the digital facade, there are real people who care about the customers, people who understand their needs, desires, and concerns. This is powerful. Even in an age where face-to-face communication is becoming rarer, especially in business interactions, consumers are more likely to perceive the social presence of a brand that communicates with an authentic human voice tone over a detached, impersonal corporate tone.

The implications of this shift are profound. Beyond merely enhancing the sense of social presence, the human tone of voice has broader impacts on business metrics that matter. Akcora (2020) delved into this, finding that the human tone of voice has a more significant positive impact on trust and customer satisfaction than the corporate tone. Trust, in particular, is a precious commodity in today's digital age, and building and maintaining it is paramount for long-term business success. This relationship between tone of voice and trust is further mediated by the perceived social presence, reinforcing the importance of this concept in today's digital business landscape (Barcelos et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2020; Sung & Kim, 2021).

Nevertheless, like all strategies, the human tone of voice is not a one-size-fits-all solution. While some earlier studies, like those by Akcora (2020) and Jeong et al. (2022), lauded its benefits, research by Barcelos et al. (2018) offers a more nuanced view. They suggest that the human tone of voice only sometimes positively impacts trust and customer satisfaction across all sectors and scenarios. In specific contexts, especially where professionalism and expertise are paramount, addressing complaints using too casual a tone could backfire. It could heighten customer disappointment, making them feel undervalued or not taken seriously (Barcelos et al., 2018). This is a critical consideration for brands, especially those in industries like finance, law, or healthcare, where the stakes are high, and customers seek assurance and expertise over friendly banter. This balance between the human and corporate tone of voice is evident in practice, especially when we look at industries with diverse customer expectations. For instance, both communication styles are still in use by two major Indonesian network providers, reflecting the varied expectations and needs of their customer base (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Diving deeper, this research discovered some interesting patterns in the Indonesian market. One of the country's major network providers, the human tone of the voice-centric brand (HCB), has wholeheartedly adopted the human tone of voice (Appendix 1), resonating with a market segment that craves more personal, relatable interactions. In stark contrast, another top network provider termed the corporate tone of the voice-centric brand (CCB), has chosen the corporate tone, appealing to a different segment that values professionalism, authority, and expertise (Appendix 2). These divergent strategies by two industry giants highlight the complexity of the issue. Their communication styles, while different, both find resonance with specific segments of the market, offering significant distinctions in the eyes of consumers. It is not about being superior to the other but about understanding the target audience and their expectations and crafting a communication strategy that resonates with them.

The ongoing debates in empirical research, combined with the distinct practical implementations by two major Indonesian network providers, highlight the need for a more in-depth exploration. This study aims to investigate further how the use of human or corporate tones of voice can enhance perceived social presence, trust, and customer satisfaction in diverse contexts. Moreover, to fully address the ongoing debate and offer actionable insights, this study will compare the impact of tone of voice between HCB and CCB, two significant players in the Indonesian market with divergent communication strategies. To this end, the following research questions will be addressed: (1) Is there a difference between HCB and CCB in how the human/corporate tone of voice influences perceived

social presence, customer trust, and customer satisfaction?; (2) Is there a difference between HCB and CCB in how perceived social presence influences customer trust and customer satisfaction?; (3) Is there a difference between HCB and CCB in how perceived social presence mediates the relationship between human/corporate tone of voice and customer trust and customer satisfaction?

From the presented background, the implications are clear, both practically and academically. On the practical front, understanding the effects of both tones of voice can be transformative for businesses. By tailoring their communication strategy to their target audience's needs and expectations, companies can significantly enhance customer satisfaction, fostering more personal, meaningful, and relevant interactions. This is not just about enhancing customer experience; it is about building long-term relationships, fostering loyalty, and driving business growth. This research's findings can also guide businesses, especially Indonesian network providers, in choosing the most effective communication style for customer feedback. After all, in today's digital age, where customer feedback is more public and accessible than ever, addressing it effectively is critical. By understanding each communication style's impact, businesses can make informed decisions, averting potential negative perceptions and continuously enhancing their brand's positive image.

On the academic front, this research seeks to fill a critical gap, offering fresh, data-driven insights into a topic of growing importance. By providing a comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of the human tone versus the corporate tone of voice, especially in their precise application context, this study can be a valuable resource for academics, researchers, and students. By comparing the two tones of voice across two network providers in a primary market like Indonesia, this study hopes to serve as a significant reference for subsequent research in the same field. In an era where digital interactions are the norm and face-to-face interactions are becoming rarer, understanding how tone of voice can influence consumer perception and interaction is paramount. This research, with its in-depth exploration and actionable insights, aims to shed light on this critical topic, guiding both businesses and academics in navigating the complex landscape of digital communications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brand Personification

Brand Personification is an evolving concept in the realm of modern marketing. At its essence, it encapsulates the strategic effort wherein a company or entity communicates its brand by imbuing it with human-like attributes. This approach is not limited to just one facet of communication. However, it spans various dimensions such as interaction with

consumers, product promotions, public relations, addressing customer grievances, and myriad other marketing-related endeavors (Simon, 2022).

The rising importance of this strategy in the contemporary marketing mix is evident. As a cornerstone of communication strategy, brand personification has attracted significant attention from both academicians and industry practitioners (Kupina et al., 2022; Noyman-Veksler et al., 2021; Tsur et al., 2020; S. Zhang et al., 2023). Its popularity stems from its potential to redefine how brands interact with consumers, especially on dynamic platforms like social media (Briki, 2022). Highlighting its prevalence, a recent content analysis disclosed that over 60 percent of global corporations have integrated brand personification into their social media communication strategies with consumers (Benny et al., 2022).

The appeal of social media platforms in fostering brand personification is evident. These platforms offer an optimal environment for cultivating interpersonal relationships with consumers. They enable businesses to engage in instantaneous, two-way communication, fostering a sense of connection even without physical interaction. Recognizing the potential of this virtual space, many brands have recalibrated their textual language to mirror everyday conversations, making it more personified and casual (Fata & Aprilya, 2021; Tsur, 2022).

However, the emergence of a more human tone of voice in the digital realm has not overshadowed the significance of the traditional corporate tone. This tone, characterized by formality and professionalism, remains a staple in various communication channels such as advertising brochures, official websites, and blogs (Noyman-Veksler et al., 2021; Simon, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Even within social media, the corporate tone of voice has its niche. It serves brands aiming to project an image that is both authentic and official (Kupina et al., 2022; Tsur et al., 2020). That said, the human tone of voice in textual formats brings unique advantages. It plays a pivotal role in bridging interpersonal distances and alleviating uncertainties consumers might harbor regarding the brand or its offerings during social media interactions (Barcelos et al., 2018).

Brands today are steering their strategies towards presenting themselves as human-like communication partners. They strive to forge psychological proximity with consumers, anchoring their strategies on eliciting feelings of intimacy and fostering positive emotions towards the brand (Benny et al., 2022). This psychological closeness translates into a tangible social presence on social media platforms. Brands that exude intimacy activate a sense of social camaraderie among consumers in digital spaces. They leverage communication cues, such as emojis, one-on-one communication, and

intimate language, to signify their social entity persona (Hayes et al., 2022). In doing so, they position themselves as attentive and engaged social media users.

In wrapping up, the theory of brand personification is characterized as a scenario where a company or entity adopts a personified style in its communication. This approach bestows the brand with human-like characteristics, whether in direct communication, product promotions, public relations, or other corporate endeavors. This theory forms the bedrock of this study, providing insights into how companies manifest their personified communication style through the choice of tone of voice.

### **Preliminary Background and Hypotheses**

In today's digital era, communication dynamics between brands and consumers have witnessed significant transformations. One aspect that garnered attention is how a brand's tone of voice can influence consumer perceptions and responses. A study conducted by Jeong et al. (2022) delved into understanding how a human tone of voice might impact consumer engagement and purchasing intentions via social media platforms. Adopting a quantitative method and a positivist approach, this research successfully gathered data from 127 participants. The findings revealed that a human tone of voice can enhance the perceived social presence, subsequently influencing consumer engagement and purchasing intentions.

In contrast, another study by Akcora (2020) took a slightly different approach, exploring the effects of four distinct tones of voice on customer trust and satisfaction. The results from this study highlighted that a casual or relaxed tone of voice had the most significant positive impact on customer trust and satisfaction. However, this research had limitations concerning its sample size and did not account for the effects of perceived social presence. Similarly, Toader et al. (2019) ventured into understanding how chatbots with varying tones of voice could influence consumer trust. Focusing on the gender of chatbots, the study discovered that female chatbots were more often forgiven for mistakes than their male counterparts. This indicates that both the tone of voice and the perceived gender of chatbots can play a role in shaping consumer perceptions.

Another exploration by Barcelos et al. (2018) investigated the influence of tone of voice on consumers' purchase intentions on social media. While this study was more conceptual, its findings suggested that a human tone of voice is not always superior to a corporate tone of voice; the effectiveness varies based on context and situation. Additionally, research by Hayes et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of textual paralanguage, like emojis, in amplifying social presence and

influencing consumer attitudes toward brands. Even though this research did not directly probe into tone of voice, its outcomes underscored the importance of other communication elements in bolstering consumer engagement with brands.

Collectively, these studies emphasize that while tone of voice plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions about brands, its selection needs to be contextually and situationally appropriate. In the context of this research, major network providers in Indonesia that have adopted the human tone of voice are termed human tone of voice-centric brands (HCB). In contrast, other providers that leverage the corporate tone of voice for communication are termed corporate tone of voice-centric brands (CCB). HCB typically responds to customer complaints on platforms like Instagram using everyday language easily comprehensible to consumers. Given this context, the following hypotheses can be formulated for this research:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between human/corporate tone of voice and perceived social presence.

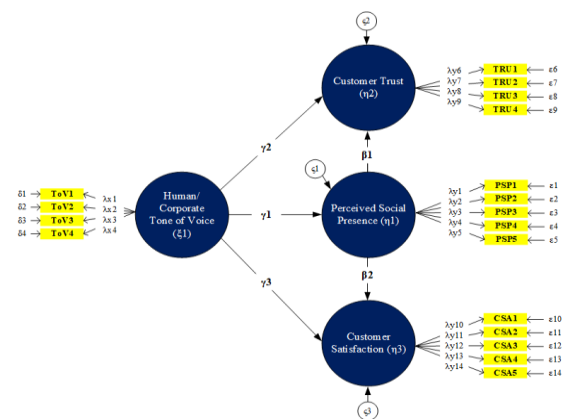


Figure 1. Structural Model Research

**Note.**  $\xi$  (Ksi) indicates the latent exogenous variable.  $\eta$  (Eta) indicates the latent endogenous variable.  $x$  indicates manifest variables measuring the exogenous latent variable.  $y$  indicates manifest variables measuring the endogenous latent variable.  $\lambda_x$  (Lambda) indicates loading factor of exogenous latent variable.  $\lambda_y$  (Lambda) indicates loading factor of endogenous latent variable.  $\gamma$  (Gamma) indicates path coefficient of exogenous variables to endogenous.  $\zeta$  (Zeta) indicates residual of latent endogenous variable.  $\delta$  (Delta) indicates measurement error of manifest variable for exogenous latent variable.  $\epsilon$  (Epsilon) indicates measurement error of manifest variable for endogenous latent variable.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between human/corporate tone of voice and customer trust.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between human/corporate tone of voice and customer satisfaction.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between perceived social presence and customer trust.

H<sub>5</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between perceived social presence and customer satisfaction.

H<sub>6</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between how perceived social presence mediates the relationships between human/corporate tone of voice and customer trust.

H<sub>7</sub>: There is significant different between HCB and CCB in the relationships between how perceived social presence mediates the relationships between human/corporate tone of voice and customer satisfaction.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This research is an empirical study dedicated to testing a model that utilizes human and corporate tones of voice in addressing customer grievances. The overarching objective is to delve deep into understanding the dynamics and nuances of these tones of voice and their influence on customer perceptions and feedback. To answer the intricate research questions, the study employs the PLS-MGA method. This method offers a robust way to compare the effects of human and corporate tones of voice, mainly when applied to two distinct case studies. Each case study provides a unique perspective, shedding light on the diverse applications and implications of these tones in real-world scenarios.

In essence, the study aims to untangle the cause-and-effect relationships between the mapped variables. These relationships, hypothesized in the preliminary stages, are visually represented in a comprehensive model (refer to Figure 1). The model guides, paving the way for systematic investigation and data interpretation.

Furthermore, one of the significant facets of this research is the comparative analysis. By juxtaposing the impacts of tone of voice on two of Indonesia's major network providers, HCB and CCB, the research seeks to highlight the distinct strategies, outcomes, and consumer responses. Such a comparison not only aids in understanding the current scenario but also offers insights for future strategies and communication paradigms. In summary, this research navigates the complexities of the tone of voice in customer communication, aiming to decipher its intricate relationships, impacts, and implications, especially within the context of two major Indonesian network providers.

## Measurement Scale

This research integrates measurement items proposed by Moran (2023) and Toader et al. (2019). These items serve as a comprehensive tool to probe into the multifaceted communication dynamics between brands and consumers on social media platforms. The factors under scrutiny include Human/Corporate Tone of Voice, Perceived Social Presence, Trust, and Customer Satisfaction.

These factors are not arbitrarily chosen but reflect the essence of consumers' expectations from the dialogues initiated by customer services on social media platforms. Delving deeper, the Human/Corporate Tone of Voice is gauged through a set of distinct items that capture its nuances. The Perceived Social Presence, an essential aspect of online interaction, is assessed using several items encompassing its breadth and depth. Trust, which forms the bedrock of any consumer-brand relationship, is measured through various items, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of its facets. Lastly, the overarching concept of Customer Satisfaction is deciphered using multiple items that touch upon its various dimensions. A detailed breakdown of these items can be found in Table 1.

Supplementing the above, the research also incorporates measurement items from Akcora (2020) when understanding customer satisfaction in their interactions with customer services on social media platforms. This inclusion provides a more enriched perspective on the digital experience of consumers and their ensuing satisfaction levels. It is crucial to emphasize that the selection and integration of each indicator item in this study have been meticulous. Each has been subjected to rigorous validity and reliability tests, assuring that the conclusions drawn are academically sound and empirically robust. A comprehensive overview of these tests and their results can be accessed in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Item(s)

Construct (s)	Item Measurement	Core Reference
Human/ Corporate Tone of Voice	Casual/Formal (Tov1)	Moran (2017)
	Funny/Serious (Tov2)	
	Irreverent/Respectful (Tov3)	
Perceived Social Presence	Enthusiastic/Matter-of- fact (Tov4)	Toader et al. (2019)
	Feels like communicating with a person when interacting with customer service on social media (PSP1)	
	Conversation with social media customer service feels warm, despite no face-to-face interaction (PSP2)	
	Interacting with social media customer service	

Construct (s)	Item Measurement	Core Reference
Trust	feels like in-person socializing (PSP3)	Toader et al. (2019)
	Feels someone genuinely cares when raising a complaint on social media (PSP4)	
	Feels someone is always there when needing assistance (PSP5)	
	Social media customer service seems sincere when addressing complaints (TRU1)	
	Social media customer service feels honest in interactions (TRU2)	
Customer Satisfaction	Confident that social media customer service is honest with me (TRU3)	Akcora (2020)
	Trust the credibility of customer service on social media (TRU4)	
	Using social media for complaints feels like a wise choice (CSA1)	
	Satisfied with using social media for complaints (CSA2)	
	Unhappy with the treatment from social media customer service (CSA3)*	
	Satisfied with the tone of social media customer service (CSA4)	
	Talking to social media customer service is frustrating (CSA5)*	

*Note.* \*Indicates revered items

## Unit Analysis

To capture the empirical implications related to consumer perceptions, participants for this study were sourced through the dissemination of a Google Form across the Jabodetabek region. The study was meticulous in its respondent selection criteria. It was imperative that respondents were not only users of the providers relevant to the research focus but also had some engagement with them on social media platforms, specifically Instagram. This engagement could either be in the form of lodging complaints or, at the very least, reading grievances posted by others.

A commendable total of 372 consumers participated and fit the bill of the stipulated sample criteria. Delving into the demographics, a near-balanced gender representation was observed—about 45 percent of the participants identified as females, while a slightly higher 55.2 percent were males. Regarding generational segmentation, the survey predominantly attracted participants from the Y and Z generations. The majority hailed from the Y

generation, closely followed by the Z generation. However, the X generation was included and had a notable presence, whereas the Baby Boomers had a minimal representation.

Education-wise, most respondents had an educational background equivalent to High School. Regarding monthly expenditure patterns, the lion's share of respondents reported monthly expenses ranging between 4.1 to 5 million Rupiah. Breaking down the sample further based on the providers, HCB and CCB both had almost equal representation. This symmetry in the sample size is instrumental, especially when employing the comparative PLS-MGA method.

### Measurement Model Evaluation

In the intricate journey of analyzing the collected data from 372 respondents, the initial phase centered around evaluating the measurement model. This step was crucial to ascertain the validity of the items and constructs under the study's microscope. The evaluation process was comprehensive, weaving in many approaches, including examinations of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Item(s)	$\lambda$	Cross Loadings				CA	rho_a	rho_c	AVE
		ToV	PSP	TRU	CSA				
Tone of Voice									
ToV1	0.973	<b>0.973</b>	0.076	0.083	0.075	0.973	0.899	0.979	0.919
ToV2	0.957	<b>0.957</b>	0.043	0.012	0.022				
ToV3	0.949	<b>0.949</b>	0.061	0.020	0.021				
ToV4	0.957	<b>0.957</b>	0.055	0.031	0.041				
Perceived Social Presence									
PSP1	0.805	0.046	<b>0.805</b>	0.508	0.578	0.882	0.884	0.913	0.679
PSP2	0.821	0.042	<b>0.821</b>	0.585	0.634				
PSP3	0.813	0.049	<b>0.813</b>	0.617	0.654				
PSP4	0.873	0.045	<b>0.873</b>	0.644	0.638				
PSP5	0.806	0.089	<b>0.806</b>	0.590	0.591				
Trust									
TRU1	0.783	0.074	0.480	<b>0.783</b>	0.557	0.876	0.892	0.915	0.729
TRU2	0.853	0.076	0.603	<b>0.853</b>	0.667				
TRU3	0.878	0.007	0.707	<b>0.878</b>	0.708				
TRU4	0.898	0.026	0.627	<b>0.898</b>	0.643				
Customer Satisfaction									
CSA1	0.919	0.036	0.708	0.703	<b>0.919</b>	0.925	0.930	0.944	0.771
CSA2	0.899	0.005	0.684	0.674	<b>0.899</b>				
CSA3	0.914	0.034	0.689	0.691	<b>0.914</b>				
CSA4	0.846	0.077	0.649	0.607	<b>0.846</b>				
CSA5	0.807	0.078	0.564	0.657	<b>0.807</b>				

**Note.** The numbers in bold represent correlation between item's loadings value and its construct.  $\lambda$  indicates loadings. CA cronbach's alpha. Rho\_a indicates composite reliability rho\_a. Rho\_c indicates composite reliability rho\_c. AVE indicates average variance extracted. ToV indicates Tone of Voice. PSP indicates perceived social presence. TRU indicates trust. CSU indicates customer satisfaction.

Guided by the benchmarks set by Hair et al. (2018), the convergent validity demanded the item loadings to ideally surpass the 0.60 or 0.70 mark, coupled with a p-value that should nestle below 0.05. Indicators that failed to achieve loadings above 0.40 were deemed potentially invalid and were on the brink of exclusion. However, a middle ground, with

loadings oscillating between 0.40 and 0.70, necessitated a more nuanced decision-making process. In such cases, the highest outer loadings of other indicators or a p-value below 0.05 became the deciding factors. The analysis results painted a promising picture: all items boasted loadings exceeding 0.70 and a p-value comfortably below 0.05, validating each indicator within the model. Furthermore, another litmus test for convergent validity revolved around the average variance extracted (AVE). An AVE value sailing above 0.50 was ideal, suggesting that over half of the variance from the reflective indicators could elucidate the respective latent variable. In this study's context, every analyzed construct met this benchmark, with data variance crossing the 50 percent threshold (for details, refer to Table 2).

Having successfully navigated the waters of convergent validity, the research assessed discriminant validity for each construct. This phase was pivotal, particularly concerning the correlations among constructs in the research model. While the Fornell-Larcker criterion remains a popular approach for discriminant validity, Henseler et al. (2015) highlighted potential pitfalls, emphasizing its occasional failure in accurately identifying discriminant validity. As a result, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was championed as a more robust evaluation strategy.

At the onset, this study incorporated the bootstrapping procedure, leveraging 5000 re-samples. The intent behind this rigorous sampling was to achieve a confidence interval (CI) that is comfortably  $\leq 1.00$ . This approach found its grounding in the recommendations put forth by stalwarts like Henseler and Fassott (2010), as well as Henseler et al. (2015). The primary objective was to iron out any wrinkles related to discriminant validity concerns.

Further fortifying the discriminant validity assessment, the study ventured into the correlation examination of item loadings, also known as cross-loadings. This procedure is an intrinsic component of discriminant validity evaluation. Hence, through the meticulous application of HTMT inference testing coupled with cross-loading examinations, the study aimed to ensure the model stands robust and free from potential discriminant validity issues (Rinaldi & Putra, 2022).

Once the validity of indicators was firmly established, the research journey transitioned into the realm of construct reliability evaluation. Two pivotal metrics took center stage: (1) Cronbach's alpha (CA) and (2) Composite Reliability (CR). In the intricate world of Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis, these metrics are instrumental in gauging the reliability of constructs. Adhering to established benchmarks, CR value that is  $\geq 0.70$  and CA that sails above 0.60 were the desired outcomes (Putra & Ardianto, 2022).

## Structural Model Evaluation

Hair et al. (2018) state that the purpose of evaluating the structural model is to understand the relationship between latent variables. Several tests (Table 3) are used to assess the structural model, which includes the coefficient of determination value ( $R^2$ ), model fit, and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). The CSA variable is influenced by the ToV and PSP factors, TRU by ToV and PSP, while ToV influences PSP. In this context, the  $R^2$  for CSA is 0.567; for TRU, it is 0.514; and for PSP, it is 0.304. This indicates that these factors explain approximately 56.7 percent of the variation in CSA, 51.4 percent of the variation in TRU, and 30.4 percent of the variation in PSP. The adjusted  $R^2$  for these three variables is 0.565, 0.512, and 0.302, which are close to the original  $R^2$  values, indicating that the model has good accuracy in explaining the variation in its endogenous variables.

Table 3. Structural Model Results

Construct(s)	$R^2$	$R^2$ adjusted	$Q^2$
CSA	0.567	0.565	0.564
TRU	0.514	0.512	0.690
PSP	0.304	0.302	0.383
Model Fit Index	Sat. Model	Est. Model	
SRMR	0.050	0.075	
Chi-square	716.493	786.253	
NFI	0.887	0.876	

**Note.** Sat. indicates saturated model. Est. indicates estimated model. PSP indicates perceived social presence. TRU indicates trust. CSU indicates customer satisfaction.

Subsequently, predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) was employed to evaluate the structural model, especially within the context of the PLS approach. The  $Q^2$  values for CSA, TRU, and PSP stood at 0.564, 0.690, and 0.383, respectively.  $Q^2$  gauges the model's capability in predicting the actual observational values. In other words, this metric provides an insight into how proficiently the model can regenerate the observed data after the estimation process. As posited by Hair et al. (2022), a  $Q^2$  value greater than zero for specific endogenous latent variables indicates that the model boasts good predictive relevance for that construct.

The evaluation process then transitioned into assessing the model's fit. Model fit is a pivotal aspect of structural analysis to ensure that the proposed model aligns well with the observed data (Hair et al., 2018). In this context, two commonly utilized metrics to measure model fit are the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the normed fit index (NFI). The SRMR for the saturated model registered at 0.050, while for the estimated model, it was 0.075. On the other hand, the NFI for the saturated model was 0.887, and for the estimated model, it stood at 0.876. In this research, both models exhibited SRMR and NFI values that align with the criteria suggested by Putra (2022), signifying a commendable model fit with the observed data.

## MICOM Evaluation

Henseler et al. (2016) introduced a procedure to assess the measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) when using PLS-MGA. This method consists of three stages: (1) Configural invariance; (2) Compositional invariance; and (3) Equality of composite means and variances. Henseler (2015) provide details for each stage, supported by simulation studies and empirical examples (Hair et al., 2018). Reports from the permutation algorithm in SmartPLS cover MICOM results for Steps 2 and 3. While Step 2 focuses on compositional invariance and Step 3 on equality of composite means and variances, Step 1 is not included in the report. This is because Step 1, which deals with configural invariance, requires deeper analysis and does not solely focus on statistical testing. However, when using SmartPLS, verification of configural invariance is automatically executed (Ringle et al., 2022).

In the evaluation, the MICOM test was conducted in Step 2. Results indicated that most constructs met the invariance criteria. However, a few other constructs showed slightly different outcomes while retaining their invariance. The MICOM test evaluates the composite invariance of various constructs in two distinct stages: (1) Step 3a (Mean) and (2) Step 3b (Variance). In Step 3a, most constructs displayed full invariance in their means, while a few others showed partial invariance. In Step 3b, the evaluation was carried out on the constructs' variances. The results mirrored those of Step 3a, where most constructs met the invariance criteria, but a few showed partial invariance. Thus, from the MICOM test results for both these steps, it can be inferred that most constructs demonstrated full invariance in their means and variances. However, specific constructs indicated partial invariance. Therefore, the data and model in this study can proceed to the PLS-MGA hypothesis testing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To identify differences between HCB and CCB in the use of Tone of Voice, the PLS-MGA technique (Structural Equation Modeling – Multi Group Analysis) was employed. Through multi-group analysis, this study was able to test whether there were significant differences between HCB and CCB based on their specific group parameter estimates, such as path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values.

The PLS-MGA test results show several interesting findings regarding the relationship between variables in this study (Table 4 and Figure 2). For the path from tone of voice to perceived social presence, there is a significant difference between HCB and CCB. HCB shows a significant path coefficient of 0.691 with t-statistics of 4.046 and a p-value of 0.000. On the other hand, CCB also shows a



significant effect with a path coefficient of -0.429, t-statistics of 9.658, and a p-value of 0.000. The effect difference between the two is 1.120 with a p-value of 0.000, confirming a significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

Table 4. PLS-MGA results

	PLS-MGA Bootstrapping Results								
	$\beta$ (Diff.)	p (Diff.)	$\beta$ (I)	t (I)	p (I)	$\beta$ (II)	t (II)	p (II)	
Direct Path									
H <sub>1</sub>	1.120	0.000	0.691	4.046	0.000	-0.429	9.658	0.000	
H <sub>2</sub>	0.515	0.000	0.291	2.579	0.030	-0.223	2.175	0.010	
H <sub>3</sub>	0.420	0.000	0.273	1.890	0.038	-0.146	2.081	0.059	
H <sub>4</sub>	-0.138	0.440	0.502	6.510	0.001	0.641	3.406	0.000	
H <sub>5</sub>	-0.120	0.471	0.568	7.604	0.000	0.688	4.148	0.000	
Indirect Path									
H <sub>6</sub>	0.622	0.000	0.347	5.324	0.000	-0.275	3.972	0.000	
H <sub>7</sub>	0.688	0.000	0.393	5.053	0.000	-0.295	4.986	0.000	

**Note.**  $\beta$  indicates the original sample/path coefficient. t indicates t-statistics. Sig. indicates the p-value probability value.  $\beta$  (Diff.) indicates the difference in distance of the original sample/path coefficient between groups. t (Diff.) indicates the difference in distance of t-statistics between groups. Sig. (Diff.) indicates the difference in distance of the p-value probability value between groups.  $\beta$  (I) indicates the original sample/path coefficient for HCB. t (I) indicates the t-statistics for HCB. Sig. (I) indicates the p-value probability value for HCB.  $\beta$  (II) indicates the original sample/path coefficient for CCB. t (II) indicates the t-statistics for CCB. Sig. (II) indicates the p-value probability value for CCB.

Turning to the path from tone of voice to customer trust, the results also show a significant difference between HCB and CCB. HCB has a path coefficient of 0.291 with t-statistics of 2.579 and a p-value of 0.030. Meanwhile, CCB shows a path coefficient of -0.223 with t-statistics of 2.175 and a p-value of 0.010. With an effect difference of 0.515 and a p-value of 0.000, H<sub>2</sub> is also accepted. Next, for the path from tone of voice to customer satisfaction, HCB shows a path coefficient of 0.273 with t-statistics of 1.890 and a p-value of 0.038, while CCB shows a path coefficient of -0.146 with t-statistics of 2.081 and a p-value of 0.059. With an effect difference of 0.420 and a p-value of 0.000, H<sub>3</sub> is also accepted. However, for the path from perceived social presence to customer trust, the test results show no significant difference between HCB and CCB, with a p-value of 0.440. This means that H<sub>4</sub> is rejected. Meanwhile, the path from perceived social presence to customer satisfaction shows a p-value of 0.471, indicating no significant difference between HCB and CCB. Thus, H<sub>5</sub> is rejected.

For the indirect paths, the mediation path of perceived social presence in the relationship between tone of voice and customer trust shows a significant difference between HCB and CCB. HCB shows a path coefficient of 0.347 with t-statistics of 5.324 and a p-value of 0.000, while CCB has a path coefficient of -0.275 with t-statistics of 3.972 and a p-value of 0.000. With an effect difference of 0.622 and a p-

value of 0.000, H<sub>6</sub> is accepted. Lastly, for the mediation path of perceived social presence in the relationship between tone of voice and customer satisfaction, HCB shows a path coefficient of 0.393 with t-statistics of 5.053 and a p-value of 0.000. CCB has a path coefficient of -0.295 with t-statistics of 4.986 and a p-value of 0.000. With an effect difference of 0.688 and a p-value of 0.000, H<sub>7</sub> is also accepted.

## Discussion

The results indicate a significant difference between HCB (human tone of voice-centric brand) and CCB (corporate tone of voice-centric brand) in the relationship between tone of voice and perceived social presence. The human tone of voice in HCB has a significant positive effect on perceived social presence, with a value of 0.691, while the corporate tone of voice in CCB has a positive influence, with a value of 0.429. The human tone of voice in HCB has a more substantial effect in building perceived social presence compared to the corporate tone of voice in CCB. This suggests that communication that is human and personal has a stronger appeal to customers. This is due to the human tone of voice that creates an impression of warmth, authenticity, and higher engagement, ultimately increasing the brand's perceived social presence in customers' minds. In line with research by Tuttosi et al. (2022), the choice of voice style in various situations affects the perception of robot intelligence in several factors, including social appropriateness, comfort, and awareness. This indicates that communication that is human and personal has a stronger appeal to customers.

In customer trust, the human tone of voice in HCB has a positive effect with a value of 0.291, while the corporate tone of voice in CCB has a positive influence with a value of 0.223. This indicates that tone of voice affects customer trust, although with different intensities between the two brands. Trust is the foundation of the customer-brand relationship. The human tone of voice in HCB shows a more substantial effect on customer trust than CCB. This indicates that customers tend to trust brands that communicate in a more relatable and human manner. According to Lameris et al. (2023), spontaneous voices have many affective and pragmatic functions that are attractive and challenging to model in TTS. This suggests that customers trust brands that communicate in a more relatable and human manner.

When reviewing customer satisfaction, the human tone of voice in HCB again shows a positive influence with a value of 0.273. However, the corporate tone of voice in CCB does not show a significant influence on customer satisfaction, even though it has a positive value of 0.146. Customer satisfaction is a crucial indicator of customer loyalty. While the human tone of voice in HCB shows a positive effect, the corporate tone in CCB does not significantly impact it. This indicates that in the

context of satisfaction, customers are looking for more than just tone of voice; they also consider other factors, such as service quality or the value received. According to Chen et al. (2021), voice can provide reliable information for gender classification with a high accuracy rate. This suggests that in the context of satisfaction, customers are looking for more than just tone of voice; they also consider other factors, such as service quality or the value received.

For the relationship between perceived social presence and customer trust, no significant difference was found between HCB and CCB. Both brands indicate that perceived social presence has a positive influence on customer trust, with HCB having a value of 0.502 and CCB having a value of 0.641. A strong perceived social presence influences customer trust in both brands. This indicates that when customers feel the brand is present and "real" in their interactions, they are more likely to trust that brand. Although research by Ng et al. (2020) shows that chatbots with social features increase perceived social presence but do not increase user trust levels, in the context of HCB and CCB, perceived social presence has proven to play a more significant role in building trust.

Similarly, for the relationship between perceived social presence and customer satisfaction, there is no significant difference between the two brands. HCB shows a positive influence with a value of 0.568, while CCB with a value of 0.688. Perceived social presence has a significant influence on customer satisfaction. This indicates that customers who feel connected with the brand are more satisfied with their interactions. According to Holthaus (2021), a robot's social credibility is related to its perceived trustworthiness. In this context, customer trust may be influenced by how "human" and credible they perceive the interaction with the brand. For example, HCB with a more human-centric tone of voice might evoke a higher sense of engagement and more vital credibility. At the same time, CCB might require additional efforts to establish the same credibility.

For indirect relationships, there are differences in the mediating role of perceived social presence in the relationship between tone of voice and customer trust. Perceived social presence mediates the relationship between human tone of voice and customer trust in HCB with a value of 0.347, while in CCB, the mediation value is 0.275. Also, in the context of the mediating role of perceived social presence in the relationship between tone of voice and customer satisfaction, HCB has a mediation value of 0.393. In contrast, CCB has a value of 0.295. In the analysis of the effect of tone of voice on trust and customer satisfaction, there are significant differences between direct and indirect effects. For HCB, which implements a human-centric tone of voice, the indirect effect through the mediation of perceived social presence on trust and

customer satisfaction is more potent than its direct effect. This signifies those customers.

## Conclusion

The testing results reveal several interesting findings regarding the relationship between tone of voice and perceived social presence, customer trust, and customer satisfaction for two different brands in the network provider industry in Indonesia. Based on these findings, several practical implementations can be applied by both brands. First, concerning perceived social presence and tone of voice, HCB should continue to maintain its human tone of voice in communication with customers to enhance perceived social presence, supported by findings that emotional tone can significantly influence consumer responses in social media contexts (De Keyser et al., 2017). Conversely, CCB may need to consider adding elements of a human tone in its communications to approach the effectiveness possessed by HCB.

Second, in the context of customer trust, both brands must ensure that their tone of voice is consistent and authentic at all customer contact points, as trust is crucial for developing customer satisfaction in electronic commerce settings (Shirazi et al., 2021). Although a human tone of voice appears more effective for HCB, CCB also gains trust through its corporate tone. Third, regarding customer satisfaction, HCB should continue using its human tone to enhance customer satisfaction. However, CCB might need to consider other strategies besides relying on its corporate tone of voice (Barcelos et al., 2018).

Fourth, concerning the relationship between perceived social presence and customer trust, both brands should focus their efforts on enhancing perceived social presence, for example, through more personalized marketing campaigns or more active social media interactions (Boubker & Belamhitou, 2018). Fifth, to improve customer satisfaction through perceived social presence, both brands should consider organizing events or promotions that involve direct interaction with customers. Sixth and seventh, given the mediating role of perceived social presence in the relationship between tone of voice and customer trust and satisfaction, both brands might need further surveys or research to understand these dynamics better. By understanding and implementing practical applications based on these findings, HCB and CCB can maximize customer trust and satisfaction in a competitive market.

In the otherhand, the findings of this study offer several significant theoretical implications. Firstly, the results indicate that tone of voice has a substantial impact on perceived social presence, underscoring the importance of understanding and selecting the appropriate tone of voice in brand communication. This also suggests that the effect of tone of voice may differ depending on brand

characteristics, as demonstrated by the differences between HCB and CCB, where variations in consumer engagement and perceived social presence significantly impact brand trust and loyalty (Pongpaew et al., 2016). Secondly, the relationship between tone of voice and customer trust adds to the existing literature on the importance of tone of voice in establishing solid customer relationships, with studies showing how consumer-brand relationships on social media, mediated by brand trust, influence brand loyalty and word-of-mouth (Jain et al., 2018).

Furthermore, while tone of voice affects customer satisfaction, its effects vary depending on the type of tone of voice and brand characteristics, highlighting nuances in the relationship that need further exploration. This is supported by findings suggesting that a human tone of voice can increase consumer engagement and perceived social presence, though its effectiveness depends on the context such as the type of product (hedonic vs utilitarian) (Barcelos et al., 2018). Fourthly, the findings affirm the importance for brands to establish and maintain a robust social presence in customers' eyes to influence their trust. Lastly, the mediating role of perceived social presence demonstrates the intricacies of the relationship between tone of voice, customer trust, and satisfaction. This confirms that there are other factors influencing this relationship, with perceived social presence being one of them, as shown in how online brand community identity and trust influence customer engagement, which in turn affects loyalty (Zhang & Li, 2022). Overall, these findings provide valuable theoretical insights for further research into how tone of voice and perceived social presence influence customer perceptions in specific brand contexts.

Nevertheless, based on previous research, a brand's tone of voice is not the only factor that can shape the perception of social presence in customers' eyes or address customer complaints, build trust, and enhance customer satisfaction. Therefore, future research is expected to explore other determining factors that can serve as alternative strategies in formulating online complaint management. Moreover, this study is limited to case studies that only compare the use of a human tone of voice by HCB and a corporate tone of voice by CCB. Consequently, the findings of this study can only be implemented in handling customer complaints in the Telecommunications industry, especially in provider companies. Thus, future research can take case studies from other industries to obtain findings that can be generalized across all industries.

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