

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2025.21.1.75>

THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF BUSINESS NAMES IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

Kenneth E. Obiorah*

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1941-5643>

University of Lagos, Nigeria

Banwo O. Adetoro**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5440-951X>

University of Lagos, Nigeria

This study examines the sociolinguistic dimensions of business names in Lagos, Nigeria, analyzing the linguistic strategies employed in their formation and the socio-cultural factors influencing their selection. It also classifies business names based on their linguistic structures and sources. Data were collected from small and local businesses in Lagos, as well as registered business names from the Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) database. Findings reveal that business names in Lagos are created through various linguistic mechanisms, including blending, abbreviation, and coinage. Additionally, graphology, pronunciation, and multicultural considerations play a crucial role in business naming practices in Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape. The study highlights how business names serve as identity markers, branding tools, and cultural signifiers, influencing customer perception and marketability. A well-crafted business name enhances brand recognition, fosters consumer engagement, and ensures competitiveness in both local and international markets. Moreover, in an era of online commerce and social media marketing, business names must be linguistically adaptable and culturally resonant to appeal to diverse audiences. This study contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics by providing insights into the intersection of language, business identity, and cultural dynamics in Lagos, offering valuable implications for entrepreneurs, linguists, and brand strategists.

Keywords: *Business names, Language, Naming Practice, Sociolinguistics, Nigeria.*

* obiorahkenneth@yahoo.com

** abanwo@unilag.edu.ng

Received: 05.02.2025

Revised: 08.03.2025

Accepted: 29.03.2025



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

© The Author(s) 2025

Introduction

Business names are more than just identifiers; they serve as living entities that represent business owners and encapsulate their brand identity. A business name can signify a corporate entity, product, service, trademark, or proprietary brand, depending on the nature of the enterprise (Piller, 1999). According to Jelena & Jelena (2019), the two most common types of business identifiers are brand names and trademarks. Legally, a name is the primary means of identifying a business, although some informal businesses operate without official names due to factors such as illegality or illiteracy of business owners. In such cases, the seller's personal identity becomes the brand by which customers recognize and interact with the business. While some businesses choose to register their names, others do not, though naming remains crucial in business, whether officially documented or not.

With the significance of business names, various professionals, including linguists, lawyers, psychologists, and marketers, take an interest in the naming process as a means of communication with consumers (Jeremic & Josijevic, 2019). Communication is an essential part of human existence, and language serves as its primary vehicle. As a social process, communication is deeply embedded in human culture and evolves alongside society. The ability to convey ideas and messages effectively is central to both personal interactions and business engagements (Schramm, 2000).

In the modern economy, consumer purchasing habits are evolving rapidly, accompanied by a surge in both domestic and foreign enterprises. This increased competition heightens the importance of having a well-crafted business name to attract customers and establish market presence. A compelling business name can significantly enhance a company's profitability and competitive advantage. According to Rao & Monroe (1998), a business name, much like a brand name, serves as a representation of a product or store, conveying critical information to consumers.

Business names may be descriptive, suggestive, arbitrary, or coined. According to Angus and Oppenheim (2004), when names are meaningful, descriptive names tend to be preferred over suggestive names, while arbitrary names are chosen over coined ones when names have no direct meaning. The study also notes that while smaller businesses may favor suggestive and descriptive names, larger corporations often prefer arbitrary or coined names, as they possess the resources to promote brand recognition. Linguistically, brand names are categorized into fanciful (invented), arbitrary, suggestive, and descriptive names (Kohil, Suri, & Leuthesser, 2005; Angus & Oppenheim, 2004).

Despite the importance of business names, Nigerian law, specifically the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA, 2020), does not explicitly address the sociolinguistic attributes of business names. The law focuses primarily on name availability and moral considerations, with certain restrictions in place. According to

CAMA (2020), a business name in Nigeria must not be identical to an existing one to prevent confusion. Additionally, certain terms, such as *Chamber of Commerce*, are prohibited. Business names that conflict with existing names, mislead consumers, or are considered deceptive or objectionable are also restricted to protect public interest and maintain order. Furthermore, names suggesting affiliation with government entities (e.g., *Federal*, *National*, or *State*) are not permitted.

However, business names are not created arbitrarily; they follow linguistic processes and are influenced by sociolinguistic considerations. Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural landscape plays a significant role in shaping business naming practices. The linguistic and cultural diversity of Nigerians often reflects in business names, making them a valuable area of study. This research aims to explore the linguistic processes involved in business name formation, as well as the factors influencing business naming decisions in Nigeria, with a particular focus on Lagos. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader understanding of naming practices in Nigeria and their sociolinguistic implications.

Relevant studies

Numerous scholars have examined the sociolinguistics of business names from various perspectives. Sociolinguistics, with its emphasis on the relationship between language use and society, provides a contextualized approach to understanding how language functions in commerce, education, and communication. In the marketing domain, sociolinguistic factors play a significant role in naming businesses and products. The selection of a brand name requires careful consideration of sociolinguistic elements and market dynamics relevant to a specific context (Mansour, 2013).

Brand names serve as linguistic symbols shaped by societal elements such as prescriptive regulations, attitudes, and values. According to Nithat (2011), brand name systems consist of three fundamental components: linguistic, legal, and marketing elements. The symbolic values expressed through linguistic forms are often influenced by the functional role of the symbols and the sociolinguistic resources that native speakers use as reference points. Selvi (2007) defines symbols as "tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs." These symbols serve as vehicles for cultural conceptions of social reality, making business names crucial for any firm worldwide. The signs displayed in front of establishments not only attract customers but also function as advertisements and conveyors of product information (Mansour, 2013).

The primary goal of any promotional activity is to persuade consumers to purchase a product. Alongside the visual presentation of goods and services, brand names significantly influence consumer attraction and brand preference (Taylor, 2007). According to Kotler, Keller, & Brady, 2009, the American Marketing Association

defines a brand as any name, phrase, sign, symbol, or design or a combination thereof used to distinguish the goods or services of one seller from those of competitors. Dutta (2013) argues that a brand represents a value that must be considered throughout the product development process rather than being merely an accessory added at the end. The selection of a brand name impacts three key aspects of brand-equity building: (1) consumer awareness of the brand, (2) brand perception, and (3) the speed of brand equity formation.

Shimp (2000) describes brand name awareness as the "gateway" to consumers' deeper understanding and retention of associations that form a brand's image. The success or failure of new products is often closely tied to their brand names, which are recognized as linguistic symbols embedded with cultural meanings and a mix of functional, psychological, and physical values (Fox, 2011).

Li and Shooshtari (2003) examined the challenges of naming brands in China and argued that successful branding requires a deep understanding of the Chinese language, which embodies the sociolinguistic characteristics typical of high-context cultures and a distinct institutional environment. Hall (1976) distinguishes high-context cultures where communication is often implicit and dependent on contextual cues from low-context cultures, such as those in most Western nations, where communication tends to be direct and explicit.

Agbado and Afful (2023) conducted a sociolinguistic study of hotel names in Accra, Ghana, from a linguistic landscape perspective. Their findings indicate that more than three-quarters of hotel names in Accra have monolingual representations, while a smaller fraction exhibits bilingual representations. English and Akan a major indigenous language in Ghana—account for the majority of bilingual names, with other language-based names including English-Spanish, Latin, Italian, Chinese, Igbo, Sanskrit, Hebrew, French, and German. In these bilingual names, English is often used as an optional element, while the other language serves as an obligatory element. The study suggests that English's dominance in Accra reflects its significant sociolinguistic role, while Akan names contribute to a sense of local identity.

Hayatul (2022) employed qualitative in-depth interviews and surveys to examine the linguistic structures of business names in the Sosrowijayan tourism village in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The study found that business names in Sosrowijayan share similarities with those in other Indonesian cities, such as Mdomesia and Bahasa. English loanwords were observed to influence noun phrase structures in the source language. However, the study also noted that while foreign words may appear more attractive, they often fail to convey the identity and class of business owners, leading some to revert to local names to express regional and ethnic affiliations.

Oliinyk, I., Ruban, L., & Schevchenko, L. (2018) explored the structure and origin of business names by analyzing their direct, subjective, and connotative meanings, as well as extralinguistic characteristics. Using data from hotel names in Brussels, they

categorized business names into anthroponymic, transpositional, play-on-words, international, sentence-based, toponymic, and background names. The study found that anthroponymic and transpositional names were more prevalent than the other categories.

The politics of language use in branding was examined by Anderson et al. (2020) in a study of Accra's central business district, using the ethno-linguistic vitality theory and place semiotics theory. By analyzing signage displayed in front of shops, the study investigated the dominance of English over local languages in Makola Market. The findings revealed that English plays a dominant role in Accra's linguistic landscape, overshadowing indigenous languages such as Ga and Twi.

The role of coinage in brand naming was explored by Zavolokina, Dolata, & Schwabe (2016) in their study of the term "FinTech," a blend of "finance" and "technology." Analyzing texts from English and German-speaking media over different periods, the study examined how the term was defined and understood, providing insights into the evolution of "FinTech" as a brand name in the digital industry.

From these studies, it can be inferred that the sociolinguistics of business names is deeply intertwined with linguistic symbols designed to capture customer attention. These names often carry cultural connotations that reflect societal values, serving as crucial tools for business identity and market positioning.

Theoretical framework

With a focus on linguistic, anthropological, and sociological perspectives, interactional sociolinguistics was primarily developed from the works of John Joseph Gumperz. It is a theory and methodology that aims to understand how interactants signal and interpret meaning in social interactions. This approach builds upon a qualitative, interpretive framework while developing analytical procedures for sociolinguistic analysis. The objective is to examine the connections between language, cultural diversity, and social interactions (Gumperz, 1982; 1999). Furthermore, Gumperz (1999) asserts that this methodology applies to all types of interactions, both within and between cultures. Therefore, interactional sociolinguistics offers valuable insights into how (intercultural) communication functions and how differences in expectations and interpretations can lead to either successful interactions or, more frequently, communication breakdowns. Gordon (2011) asserts that individuals engaging in interlingual communication bring their own "briefcase" of acceptable international standards, expectations, and interpretations.

Grant & Stephen (2005) state that a variety of sociolinguistic factors influence customers' purchase decisions. These include social and cultural elements such as family, friends, class, culture, and subculture. Additionally, language selection, including brand naming, is influenced by social factors in sociolinguistics. Several social influences can also impact a name, including: (1) Social class: individuals from

higher social classes, for example, may recognize a brand by its heritage. (2) Educational background: individuals with strong educational backgrounds are more likely to critically assess a brand. (3) Trust: reputation and quality influence brand perception. (4) Value: this theory is relevant to this research as it highlights the social and cultural factors affecting brand naming across cultures. It underscores the significance of interpretation and meaning in the branding process across different cultural contexts.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to investigating business names in Nigeria, with a focus on business names in Lagos, one of the largest cities and commercial hubs in Nigeria. Data for this study were gathered through a survey of various business names, comprising 150 business names collected from both online and offline sources. Although the business names are based in Lagos, many of them extend their presence to different parts of Nigeria and across Africa. Due to the vastness of Lagos, the researchers conducted a six-week field study, touring various parts of the state to authenticate some business names collected online. Business names from all types of enterprises were included, ranging from local traders on the streets to well-established businesses such as banks, hotels, oil companies, and printing presses. Since the primary focus is on business names, the researchers only needed to observe and document them for analysis. The collected business names were then classified based on their formation processes and language usage. Out of the 150 names gathered, only 80 were analyzed due to the lack of clear meaning in some names. The names are presented exactly as written by their respective business owners. Descriptive linguistics was employed in the analysis.

Findings

The interactional sociolinguistic theory provides a framework for understanding linguistic interactions, which manifest in the formation of business names through various linguistic processes. These processes include blending, the use of initials and acronyms, abbreviation, adoption of indigenous language elements, and code-mixing. Based on these linguistic mechanisms, the following categories of business names can be identified in Nigeria:

1. Blended business names

Blending is a word-formation process that involves creating a new term by combining segments of two or more existing words within the same language (Ndemiche, 2003). In the context of business names, blending involves merging parts of words that relate to the business identity. Examples of such business names in Nigeria include:

- 1) ABATEX (Aba Textile Mills PLC)

- 2) ABCTRAN (ABC Transport)
- 3) ALEX (Aluminium Extrusion Industry PLC)
- 4) CAPOIL (Capital Oil PLC)
- 5) CAPABETO (Cappa and D'Alberto PLC)
- 6) CONFDINS (Confidence Insurance)
- 7) IAINSURE (Investment and Allied Insurance PLC)
- 8) NIGERIN (Nigeria Insurance Company PLC)
- 9) NIGLAMPS (Nigeria Lamps Industry)
- 10) NIGROPEs (Nigeria Ropes PLC)
- 11) NIWICABLE (Nigeria Wire and Cable PLC)
- 12) NIYAMCO (Nigeria Yeast and Alcoholic Manufacturers)
- 13) NASCON (National Salt Company of Nigeria PLC)
- 14) NEIMETH (Neimeth International Pharmacy PLC)
- 15) ABBEYBDS (Abbey Building Society PLC)
- 16) OSASINS (Oasis Insurance PLC)
- 17) REGALIN (Regency Alliance Insurance PLC)
- 18) STDINSURE (Standard Alliance Insurance PLC)
- 19) ZINCOME (Zenith Income Fund)
- 20) ZINTHICAL (Zenith Ethical Fund)
- 21) UNIONDAC (Union Diagnostic and Clinical Services PLC)

In these examples, the business names are formed by extracting segments of the original words and combining them. For instance, ABATEX is derived from *Aba* and *Textile*, while OSASINS is created by omitting the vowel *a* from *Oasis*, modifying it to *Osasi*, and then adding *n* from *Insurance* to produce *Osasins*. Similar morphological strategies are employed in the formation of other blended business names.

2. Business names formed from initials and acronyms

This category includes business names created using the initial letters of words, either from the business owner's name or the company's full name. Some business names are formed solely from initials, while others incorporate them alongside other English words. Examples include:

- a) ABC Transport Company
- b) U.C. Global Investment Ltd.
- c) M.C. Autos (Nig) Ltd.

Additionally, some business names are derived from the initials of longer company names, such as:

1. Wiggins Teape Nigeria PLC
2. West Africa Aluminum Product PLC
3. University Press Ltd.
4. United Nigeria Textiles PLC
5. United Bank for Africa (UBA) PLC

6. United African Company of Nigeria PLC
7. Union Bank of Nigeria
8. Northern Nigeria Flour Mills PLC
9. Nigerian Auction Handling Company
10. Nigeria Energy Sector Fund
11. Mass Telecom Innovation PLC
12. Great Nigeria Insurance PLC
13. Forte Oil
14. First City Monument Bank (FCMB) PLC
15. Eco Transnational Incorporated
16. DiChemical and Allied Products PLC
17. Cement Company of Northern Nigeria PLC
18. Aluminium Extrusion Industrial PLC
19. American International Insurance Company
20. Benue Cement Company PLC

A notable aspect of initial-based business names is their prevalence among Chinese-owned businesses operating in Nigeria. Many Chinese companies adopt initial-based naming conventions similar to those found in Nigerian business nomenclature. Examples of such names include:

Chinese Business Names in Nigeria Based on Initials and Acronyms

- a) DMTG (大连机床集团 / Dàlián Jīchuáng Jítuán) – Dalian Machine Tool Group.
- b) TCL (通讯设备 / Tōngxùn Shèbèi) – TCL Telecommunication Equipment.
- c) WNQ (万年青运动器材制造 / Wànniánqīng Yùndòng Qícái Zhìzào) – WNQ Body Building Equipment.
- d) BYD (比亚迪 / Bìyàdí) – BYD Automobiles and Rechargeable Batteries

Brand Names Formed by (Pseudo-)Acronyms/Initialisms.

- a) LINIX (恒电集团联宜电机 / Héngdiàn Jítuán Liányí Diànqì) – LINIX Electrical Machinery.
- b) ZOJE (中捷缝纫机 / Zhōngjié Fèngrènjī) – ZOJE Sewing Machines.
- c) SORL (瑞立集团 / Ruìlì Jítuán) – SORL Auto Parts.
- d) ZTE (中兴通讯 / Zhōngxīng Tōngxùn) – Zhong Xing Telecommunication Equipment.

These examples illustrate how initials and acronyms are extensively utilized in business name formation across different cultural and linguistic contexts, particularly in Nigerian and Chinese businesses. The adoption of such names reflects a strategic approach to branding, often aimed at brevity, recognizability, and market positioning.

3. Shortened business names

Shortening is a word-formation process that involves reducing elements of a business name while retaining its core meaning. This process is similar to clipping, where a longer name is shortened to create a more concise and recognizable form. In many cases, businesses with longer names adopt shortened versions for ease of pronunciation and customer recall. Examples of shortened business names in Nigeria include:

1. Wema (Wema Bank)
2. Vono (Vono Products)
3. Yanlee (Yanlee Containers Nigeria Limited)
4. Unitcap (Unity Kapital Assurance Limited)
5. Unionvent (Union Ventures and Petroleum PLC)
6. Unihomes (Union Home Savings and Loan PLC)
7. Tropicpet (Tropical Petroleum Products PLC)
8. Total (Total Nigeria)
9. Staco (Starcomms PLC)
10. Rokana (Rokana Industry PLC)
11. Rank Unit (Rank Unity Petroleum Company PLC)
12. Polyprod (Poly Products Nigeria PLC)
13. Access (Access Bank PLC)

In these examples, the full names originally contained multiple words, but only one or two key components were retained and shortened to represent the business name. While the extent of shortening varies across names, the process follows a general pattern of abbreviation that enhances memorability and ease of communication.

4. Language-based business names

Beyond the structural and linguistic processes of business name formation, names can also be classified based on their linguistic and cultural origins. Business names in Nigeria can be categorized into indigenous, foreign, and code-mixed names.

(a) Indigenous Business Names

According to interactional sociolinguistic theory, social and cultural factors significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions. Business names that incorporate indigenous linguistic elements resonate with local communities by evoking familial, social, and cultural associations. Indigenous business names are entirely derived from Nigerian languages and do not contain English elements. Examples include:

- a) Baba Ijebu (Father of Ijebu) – A betting company
- b) Iyamoria (Mother of Moria) – A food vendor
- c) Iya Basira (Mother of Basira) – A food vendor
- d) Iya Amala (Mother of Amala) – A food vendor
- e) Alabukum – A pharmaceutical product

These names are highly recognizable within the local linguistic and cultural context. The mere mention of an indigenous business name often provides an indication of the industry or service it represents, setting it apart from other businesses.

(b) Foreign Business Names

Foreign business names are those that are not derived from indigenous Nigerian languages. Many such business names, particularly those of multinational corporations, retain their original English or foreign forms without translation or transliteration into Nigerian languages. Examples include:

1. West Africa Aluminium Product PLC
2. University Press PLC
3. First Bank
4. Access Bank
5. United Nigeria Textiles PLC
6. United Bank for Africa (UBA) PLC
7. United African Company of Nigeria PLC
8. Union Bank of Nigeria
9. Wema Bank
10. Total Nigeria
11. Starcomms PLC
12. Rokana Industry PLC
13. Rank Unity Petroleum Company PLC
14. Poly Products Nigeria PLC
15. Access Bank PLC

Unlike in China, where foreign business names are often translated or transliterated to enhance cultural acceptance and effective marketing, foreign businesses in Nigeria typically retain their original names. In contrast, Chinese business naming conventions often involve creative adaptations of foreign brand names to align with Chinese phonetics and cultural meanings. Examples include:

- 1) BMW (宝马 / Bǎomǎ) – "Valuable horse"
- 2) Benz (奔驰 / Bēnchí) – "Gallop or run quickly"
- 3) Jaguar (捷豹 / Jiébào) – "Great leopard" (also meaning "good news")
- 4) Jetta (捷达 / Jiédá) – "Arriving quickly"
- 5) Saab (绅宝 / Shēnbǎo) – "Gentleman's treasure"
- 6) Accord (雅阁 / Yǎgé) – "Elegant room"
- 7) Pentium (奔腾 / Bēnténg) – "Running fast"
- 8) Athlon (速龙 / Sùlóng) – "Swift dragon"
- 9) Ericsson (爱立信 / Àilìxìn) – "Highly trustworthy"
- 10) Pizza Hut (必胜客 / Bìshèngkè) – "Surely winning customers' favor"

This contrast highlights different linguistic and cultural approaches to branding and market integration in business naming conventions.

(c) Code-Mixed Business Names

Code-mixed business names incorporate elements from multiple languages, often reflecting the bilingual or multilingual nature of Nigerian society. These names typically combine indigenous Nigerian languages with English or other foreign languages. Examples include:

- a) Dan Chudex – A combination of Dan(iel) (English name) and Chude (Igbo name).
- b) Kachifo Limited – A mixture of English and Igbo words.
- c) Onye-eze Investment – A blend of Igbo and English, though its meaning may not be immediately clear to non-Igbo speakers.
- d) Ifitness Venture – A name that provides a clear indication of the business focus (fitness services).
- e) Chinedu Auto-Parts – A name that suggests the owner deals in automobile spare parts.

Code-mixed names are particularly common in Lagos, where sole proprietorships thrive. In many cases, these names serve as direct identifiers of the business owners, making them easily recognizable within local networks. Additionally, code-mixed names often offer clues about the nature of the business, facilitating customer engagement and brand association.

The sociolinguistics of business naming in Nigeria reflects a diverse range of linguistic strategies, cultural influences, and commercial considerations. Shortened names enhance accessibility and brand recall, while initials and acronyms contribute to corporate identity. Additionally, language-based naming conventions—whether indigenous, foreign, or code-mixed play a crucial role in branding, consumer engagement, and cultural affiliation. Notably, the presence of foreign businesses in Nigeria and the absence of name transliterations contrast with Chinese naming practices, highlighting cross-cultural variations in business identity formation.

By analyzing these naming strategies, this study provides deeper insights into how language shapes business identity, consumer perception, and commercial success within Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural business landscape.

Issues in choosing or writing business names in Lagos

The characteristics of a successful brand name have been extensively discussed by scholars. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), a product's brand name should effectively convey its benefits and qualities. Additionally, it should be easy to pronounce, recognizable, and memorable. Furthermore, it must be distinctive, legally protectable, and extendable, while avoiding negative connotations. Creating a brand name that resonates with consumers is a crucial marketing task (Keller & Lehmann,

2006), particularly in an era where brands compete across borders, cultures, and value systems (Mittal & Tsilos, 1995). The challenges associated with brand naming are exacerbated by linguistic differences in phonetics, semiotics, and semantics. Given the complexity of languages and cultural diversity, localizing a brand name presents a significant challenge, particularly in Africa. Ideally, a business name should be memorable, reflect the company's identity, and indicate its geographical location. Additionally, it should be aesthetically pleasing, resemble the original intent, and avoid unintended negative connotations. In light of these considerations, the following sections examine key factors to consider when creating business names in Lagos, Nigeria.

1. Linguistic Considerations

One of the primary factors in choosing a business name is the language in which it is written. Nigeria is a multilingual country with over 400 languages, where English serves as the official language, while Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo are the three major indigenous languages. The choice of language for a brand name should be deliberate and strategic. For instance, a language activist may select a name from one of Nigeria's endangered languages to promote linguistic awareness. However, before choosing a minority or indigenous language, businesses must assess the potential impact on their brand identity and market reception.

2. Multicultural Considerations

Nigeria's cultural diversity presents a unique challenge in business naming, as words and names in one language may have unintended meanings in another. For example, certain Igbo names that carry positive connotations may sound inappropriate or even offensive in Yoruba.

- a) Chidi (meaning *God exists* in Igbo) phonetically resembles a phrase in Yoruba that means *open your buttocks*.
- b) Nwobodo (meaning *one who owns the town* in Igbo) sounds like a vulgar expression in Yoruba.
- c) Okerie (*one born on Eke market day* in Igbo) sounds similar to *penis* in Yoruba.
- d) Njoku (a common Igbo surname) translates in Yoruba as *dancing until death*, which would be unsuitable for a brand associated with automobile brake systems.

Conversely, certain Yoruba names may carry unintended meanings in Igbo. For example:

- a) Yemisi (a common Yoruba name) translates to *give me oral sex* in Igbo, making it inappropriate for use in Igbo-speaking regions.
- b) Olaitan sounds similar to *one who gives threesomes* in Igbo, which could lead to unfavorable interpretations.

c) Olanike (a respectable Yoruba name) phonetically resembles an Igbo phrase meaning *died in an accident*, making it unsuitable for branding safety-related products like automobile brakes.

These examples highlight the necessity of cross-cultural evaluation in brand naming to prevent unintended negative associations that could damage a brand's reputation.

3. Graphological Considerations

Graphology, or the visual representation of written language, plays a crucial role in brand naming. Spelling errors, punctuation misplacement, and improper word segmentation can significantly alter the perception of a brand name. For instance:

1. Anu's Kitchen (a Yoruba name) written as *Anus Kitchen* would create an unintended and inappropriate meaning.

2. Tonto Dike Christian Ministry mistakenly written as *Toto Di(c)k Christian Ministry* could lead to misinterpretations, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Therefore, careful attention must be paid to spelling, punctuation, and typography to ensure clarity and professionalism in business name representation.

4. Pronunciation Considerations

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of brand identity, as a name that is difficult to pronounce may hinder word-of-mouth marketing and brand recall. Unfortunately, many small businesses overlook this factor, assuming that merely printing the name on business cards suffices. A business name, whether formed from initials, abbreviations, or real words, must be easily pronounceable to facilitate memorability.

For instance, some Chinese bicycle brands in Nigeria incorporate animal names symbolizing strength (e.g., *lion*, *crocodile*, *eagle*, *elephant*) or speed (e.g., *horse*, *deer*, *fish*, *pigeon*) to enhance market appeal. Similarly, selecting names that are phonetically accessible to a broad audience ensures wider market reach and acceptance.

The process of selecting and writing business names in Lagos requires careful consideration of linguistic, cultural, graphical, and phonetic factors. A successful brand name should align with the company's identity, be easily recognizable, and resonate positively across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Additionally, businesses must be mindful of potential misinterpretations and cultural sensitivities to prevent unintended negative brand perceptions. Ultimately, effective brand naming strategies contribute significantly to brand positioning, consumer engagement, and market success.

Conclusion

This research highlights that the sociolinguistics of business names in Nigeria is structured around key linguistic and cultural principles. First, creativity plays a crucial role in the formation of business names, as many are coined through the combination of one or more words to resonate with consumers and establish brand identity. This approach enhances brand recall and provides an immediate association with the

company's products or services. For example, business names such as *Niglamps* (Nigeria Lamps Industry), *Nigropes* (Nigeria Ropes PLC), and *Niwicable* (Nigeria Wire and Cable PLC) effectively convey their respective industries while maintaining brevity and memorability.

Second, the study observes that the use of initials and acronyms is a prevalent naming strategy in Nigeria. This trend is primarily driven by the need for brand simplification, distinctiveness, memorability, and adaptability to logos, signage, and promotional materials. Acronyms and initialisms provide businesses with a unique identity while maintaining a level of privacy. For instance, *ABC Transport Company* benefits from the familiarity of the first three letters of the alphabet, making it easy to remember. Similarly, *M.C. Autos (Nig) Ltd.* utilizes *M.C.*, a term commonly associated with a master of ceremonies, which may enhance brand recognition. Likewise, *BYD* (Build Your Dreams), a Chinese automobile and rechargeable battery company operating in Nigeria, leverages a name that evokes themes of aspiration, perseverance, and focus, which appeal to consumer emotions and values.

Third, the study identifies the widespread use of shortened business names in Nigeria due to their conciseness, ease of pronunciation, curiosity-inducing nature, and strong memorability. These names efficiently introduce the company's offerings while ensuring quick brand recognition. For instance, *Unihomes* (Union Home Savings and Loan PLC) succinctly reflects the company's services, while the prefix *Uni-* could be interpreted as *unique*, *unity*, *units*, or *university*, thereby creating multiple layers of meaning that engage potential customers.

Additionally, the popularity of indigenous business names in Nigeria underscores their cultural significance. Such names foster a sense of belonging, strengthen social ties, and enhance customer engagement by reflecting local identities and values. Many businesses incorporate indigenous names to establish cultural connections, build consumer trust, and highlight the personal legacy of the business owner.

Finally, the sociolinguistics of business names in Nigeria is shaped by social networks, cultural diversity, and language usage, all of which must be carefully considered when selecting a brand name. Entrepreneurs must account for linguistic implications, graphological accuracy, and pronunciation to ensure their business names effectively communicate their intended meaning and avoid unintended negative connotations. By strategically navigating these linguistic and cultural factors, business owners can enhance their brand's marketability, cultural resonance, and long-term success.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research does not involve human subjects.

References

Agbado, P., & Afful, J. B. A. (2023). A sociolinguistic study of hotel names in Accra, Ghana: A linguistic landscape perspective. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*, 44(2), 235-252.

Anderson, R., Boateng, F., & Mensah, K. (2020). Language and branding: The politics of language use in Accra's central business district. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 14(3), 367-388.

Angus, E., & Oppenheim, C. (2004). Studies of the characteristics of brand names used in the marketing of information products and services. *Aslib Proceedings*, 56(1), 12-23.

Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA). (2020). *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria*. Federal Government of Nigeria.

Dutta, S. (2013). Branding as a strategy: the role of brand names in consumer perception. *International Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(4), 102-118.

Fox, S. (2011). Brand names as linguistic symbols: Cultural meanings and consumer preferences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(5), 743-758.

Gordon, C. (2011). *Interpersonal pragmatics*. Walter de Gruyter.

Grant, S., & Stephen, G. (2005). Branding and consumer behavior: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(4), 482-491.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.

Gumperz, J. J. (1999). Interactional sociolinguistics: The study of how speakers signal and interpret meaning in discourse. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 3(2), 133-149.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Press.

Hayatul, R. (2022). Linguistic structures of business names in the Sosrowijayan tourism village, Yogyakarta. *Journal of Language and Society*, 21(3), 112-130.

Jeremić, J.D., & Josijević, J. (2019). To blend so as not to brand: A study of trademarks and brand names' lexis. *Lexis* [Online] 14. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.3732>

Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science*, 25(6), 740-759. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1050.0153>

Kohil, C. S., Suri, R. H., & Leuthesser, L. (2005). Creating brand identity that works: A study of evaluation of new brand names. *Journal of Business Research*, 58 (11), 1506–1515. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.07.007>

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2008). *Principles of marketing* (12th ed.). Pearson Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., & Brady, M. (2009). *Marketing management* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Li, F., & Shooshtari, N. (2003). Branding in high-context cultures: The case of China. *International Journal of Business and Cultural Studies*, 12(4), 87-101.

Mansour, M. (2013). The sociolinguistics of brand naming: A marketing perspective. *Journal of Marketing and Linguistics*, 19(3), 67-85.

Mittal, V., & Tsilos, M. (1995). The impact of service attributes and consequences on customer satisfaction: A multi-attribute approach. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 32(1), 73-84. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3152118>

Ndemile, M. (2003). *Linguistic processes in word formation: A sociolinguistic approach*. Oxford University Press.

Nithat, N. (2011). The linguistic, legal, and marketing dimensions of brand name systems. *Journal of Business and Language Studies*, 14(2), 45-62.

Oliynyk, I., Ruban, L., & Schevchenko, L. (2018). Motivational structure and origin of business names. *Advanced Education*, 5(10), 167–174. <https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.125436>

Piller, I. (1999). Iconicity in brand names. In M. Nanny & O. Fischer (Eds.), *From mining meaning: Iconicity in language and literature* (pp. 325-341). John Benjamins.

Rao, A. R., & Monroe, K. B. (1998). The effect of price, brand name, and store name on buyers' perception of product quality: An integrative review. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26(8), 351-357.

Schramm, W. (2000). *Men, message, and media: A look at human communication*. Harper & Row.

Selvi, A. (2007). Symbols and brand identity: A linguistic approach. *International Journal of Semiotics and Branding*, 11(2), 34-50.

Shimp, T. (2000). *Advertising, promotion, and supplemental aspects of integrated marketing communications* (5th ed.). Dryden Press.

Taylor, C. (2007). The role of brand names in consumer attraction and preference. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(1), 56-72.

Zavolokina, L., Dolata, M., & Schwabe, G. (2016). The evolution of FinTech as a brand name: A sociolinguistic analysis. *Journal of Digital Business Studies*, 8(1), 21-38.

**ԱՆՎԱՆՈՒՄՆԵՐԻ ՀԱՆՐԱԼԵԶՎԱԲԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԲՆՈՒԹԱԳԻՐԸ
ԳՈՐԾԱՐԱՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԴԱՇԾՈՒՄ ԼԱԳՈՍՈՒՄ**

**Քենեթ Է. Օքորա
Բանվո Օ. Աղետորո**

Սույն ուսումնասիրությունն անդրադարնում է Լազու քաղաքում գործարար դաշտում շրջանառվող անվանումների հանրալեզվաբանական առանձնահատկություններին՝ վերլուծելով դրանց ձևավորման լեզվաբանական ռազմավարություններն ու անվանման ընտրության վրա

ազդող հանրամշակութային գործոնները: Հոդվածում բիզնես անվանումները դասակարգվում են՝ ելնելով դրանց լեզվական կառուցվածքից և սկզբնավորման աղյուրներից: Փաստական տվյալները հավաքվել են Լազոսի փոքր ու տեղական բիզնեսներից, ինչպես նաև Նիգերիայի Կորպորատիվ գործերի հանձնաժողովի տվյալների բազայում գրանցված բիզնես անվանումներից: Ուսումնասիրության արդյունքները ցույց են տալիս, որ Լազոսում բիզնես անվանումները ձևավորվում են տարբեր լեզվաբանական մեխանիզմներով (բլենդավորում, կրծասում, նորաբանություն): Բացի այդ, ուղղագրությունը, արտասանությունը և բազմամշակութային գործոնները մեծ դեր են խաղում անվանակոչության գործընթացում՝ հաշվի առնելով Նիգերիայի բազմալեզու միջազգայրը: Ուսումնասիրությունը ընդգծում է, որ բիզնես անվանումները ծառայում են որպես ինքնության ցուցիչներ, բրենդավորման գործիքներ և մշակութային նշաններ՝ ազդելով հաճախորդների ընկալման և շուկայական դիրքի վրա: Ժամանակակից պայմաններում, եթե թվայնացումն ու գորալացումը որոշիչ դեր ունեն բիզնեսի տեսանելիության համար, անվանակոչության ռազմավարական նշանակությունն անգնահատելի է: Լավ մշակված բիզնես անվանումը իրանում է բրենդի ճանաչելիությունը, նպաստում է սպառողների ներգրավվածությանը և ապահովում է մրցունակություն ինչպես տեղական, այնպես էլ միջազգային շուկաներում: Ավելին, առցանց առևտորի և սոցիալական մեղիա մարքեթինգի դարաշրջանում բիզնես անվանումները պետք է լինեն լեզվական առումով ձկուն և մշակութային առումով ներդաշնակ՝ տարբեր լսարանների ուշադրությունը գրավելու համար:

Բանալի բառեր՝ բիզնես անվանումներ, լեզու, անվանակոչության կարգ, հանրակառանություն, Նիգերիա: