

# ANALYSIS OF BRAND NAMING – NAMING CONVENTIONS AND LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN CREATING NAMES OF IT COMPANIES

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## **Abstract**

The paper analyzes a collection of IT companies, looking into the naming conventions and the linguistic strategies employed to create the company names. Our corpus consists of 204 IT companies that operate in Romania. I collected 25 names of Romanian IT companies that offer various tech-related services to national and foreign clients, based on the composition of the names and on their level of descriptiveness or suggestiveness. The analysis of the naming conventions highlights three categories of names: descriptive names, suggestive names and fanciful names. Some names use recognizable IT words combined in original ways, while others blend or invent words to convey the company's mission and services. Linguistic elements like phonotactic patterns, stress patterns and syllable structure play an important role in creating the name of IT companies. The name composition and word formation depend on the degree of directness and clarity of the companies' messaging.

**Keywords:** *brand name, IT services companies, domain name, naming conventions, linguistic strategies*

## **Résumé**

Cet article analyse une collection d'entreprises informatiques, examinant les conventions de dénomination et les stratégies linguistiques utilisées pour créer les noms d'entreprises. Notre corpus se compose de 204 entreprises informatiques opérant en Roumanie. J'ai recueilli 25 noms d'entreprises informatiques roumaines offrant divers services liés à la technologie à des clients nationaux et étrangers, en me basant sur la composition des noms et sur leur degré de descriptivité ou de suggestivité. L'analyse des conventions de dénomination met en évidence trois catégories de noms: les noms descriptifs, les noms suggestifs et les noms fantaisistes. Certains noms utilisent des mots informatiques reconnaissables combinés de manière originale, tandis que d'autres fusionnent ou inventent des mots pour transmettre la mission et les services de l'entreprise. Des éléments linguistiques tels

que les modèles phonotactiques, les modèles de stress et la structure des syllabes jouent un rôle important dans la création du nom des entreprises informatiques. La composition des noms et la formation des mots dépendent du degré de clarté et de directivité de la communication des entreprises.

**Mots-clés:** *nom de marque, entreprises de services informatiques, nom de domaine, conventions de dénomination, stratégies linguistiques*

## 1. Introduction

Marketing scholars define a “*brand*” as “a name, term, sign, symbol (or combination of these) that identifies the maker or seller of the product” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). David Aaker suggests that a *brand* should not only define its functional purpose, the job that it is going to do, but also express the brand’s higher purpose (Kotler, 2016). The name of a brand contributes to brand building, on the one hand, by informing customers about the benefits coming from choosing that brand and by persuading them to purchase the company’s products and/or services, on the other hand. In the definition above, the Marketing scholars employ clear and simple language managing to convey the key linguistic elements associated with the concept of a brand name. Also, the dictionary entries are concise and provide a comprehensive perspective on the term. The first known use of “brand name” was in 1922. It has entries in the Cambridge Online Dictionary and Merriam Webster Online Dictionary as follows:

*Brand name* is “the name given to a particular product by the company that makes it” (Cambridge Online Dictionary)

*Brand name* is “an arbitrarily adopted name that is given by a manufacturer or merchant to an article or service to distinguish it as produced or sold by that manufacturer or merchant and that may be used and protected as a trademark” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary).

The Cambridge definition is more concise and user-friendly, while the Merriam Webster definition provides a more comprehensive, technical, and legal perspective on the term “brand name.” Analyzing the language used in both definitions, I have noticed that the phrase “given to” in the Cambridge definition indicates the action of naming, emphasizing that the company assigns the name to its product whereas the phrase “by the company that makes it” (the doer of the action or the agent) adds clarity to the definition by specifying the entity responsible for naming the product.

The Merriam Webster definition begins with “an arbitrarily adopted name,” which implies that the name is chosen deliberately highlighting the unique nature of brand names. It also includes the action of naming “by a manufacturer or merchant”

(the agent) to emphasize that brand names are created by the company producing or selling the product or service. The phrase “to distinguish it as produced or sold by that manufacturer or merchant” highlights the core purpose of a brand name, which is to differentiate the product or service in the market and draws attention to the role of marketing in a brand. The sentence containing the modal verb “may be used and protected as a trademark” indicates that brand names can be registered and legally protected.

In this paper, my aim is to identify names of IT companies that operate in Romania and select them taking into consideration the linguistic classification of brand names. In order to identify the strategies employed in the creation of the company names, I investigate their composition, descriptiveness, suggestiveness, memorability, pronunciation & sound, and linguistic aspects.

In today’s dynamic market, the ability to appeal to customers’ hearts and well-being is a paramount strategy for building lasting brand loyalty and success. Emotional marketing, a concept thoroughly explored in various renowned books (Kotler, 2016), goes beyond traditional marketing strategies. For instance, Bernd Schmitt’s “Experiential Marketing”, Marc Gobe’s “Emotional Branding,” and Kevin Roberts’ “Lovemarks” delve into the power of emotional connections in marketing. Notable marketers like Howard Schultz of Starbucks and Steve Jobs of Apple set exceptional examples of successful emotional marketing (Ibid.). Starbucks, with its concept of providing a “third place for drinking coffee,” fosters a sense of community and comfort. Apple, on the other hand, captivates consumers with its “creative imagination,” invoking a deep emotional connection to its innovative and user-centric products (Ibid.).

A company with a “brand name” that has become known and appreciated by consumers, must also consider reinforcing the brand identity through a memorable “domain name” as it will attract more visitors on the website of the company (Rol.ro). The domain name should match the company name. An effective domain name uses popular keywords which can help to give the website a SEO “boost” (Ibid.). Moreover, it avoids hyphens, numbers, excessive characters and unique spelling, therefore the best domain name extensions to consider for an online business are .ro, .eu, .com, .net, .biz, .info, .click, .online, .it, .es and .fr (Ibid.).

Experts in brand naming point out that most businesses describe their business name too literally, using overused tech terms like *digital*, *web*, *internet*, and *intelligence* (Pool, 2023). Moreover, companies should concentrate on naming their business in a way that has a story behind it (Ibid.). For example, the Oracle Corporation went through a series of name changes before arriving at its more contemporary name Oracle; the origin of its name is based on a story unveiling the

collaboration with the CIA on a project called Oracle which the founders took and implemented in 1983 (Ibid.).

## **2. Studies on Brand Names**

The identified studies delve into the realm of brand naming highlighting key theoretical aspects and empirical research. The first study by Klink and Athaide (2012) aims to uncover the intricate art of crafting brand names that can effectively convey and shape brand personality, as elucidated by Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale. The findings of this investigation shed light on the significant role that phonetics play in creating distinct brand personalities. Specifically, it reveals that brand names featuring back vowels exhibit a remarkable aptitude for projecting a Ruggedness personality while the brand names incorporating front vowels excel in conveying the traits of Sophistication and Sincerity. These nuanced associations between linguistic elements and brand personality offer marketers valuable insights into how they can strategically manipulate phonetics to resonate with their target audience and carve a unique brand identity.

A pragmatic-cognitive approach to brand names is adopted by Lorena Perez Hernandez to study Rioja wine brands (2013). The systematic application of the pragmatic and conceptual strategies identified in this study yields a diverse array of lexical expansions. The author argues that a meticulous selection of the initial inventory of core concepts, as well as the source concepts employed in metonymic and metaphoric extensions, can assist in minimizing the creation of unfavorable associations.

Another study on the nomenclature of e-cigarettes brands (Nuessel, 2016) demonstrates that the linguistic choices in brand naming play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. Therefore, these names are not mere labels but carefully crafted linguistic tools that tap into cultural nuances and aspirations. The author states that manufacturers aim to establish connections with consumers by selecting evocative names, which appeal to their emotions, desires, and identities.

As far as the technology-related names are concerned, we present two studies on the names of technology brands (He, 2003) and the corporate technology names (Cowan, 2005). He (2003) analyzes technology brand names from Silicon Valley companies and signals that fanciful names are predominant for technology brands in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He also finds that the overwhelming majority of technology brand names are neologisms, which contain hints of implied semantical meanings (Ibid.). Unlike He, Cowan (2005) finds that the process of naming a company involves linguistic, cultural, social aspects, as well as business data. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, companies were often named after their founders or with highly descriptive terms

that precisely reflected their products (Ibid.). The business landscape is evolving and we consider the choice of company names that operate in the IT sector depends on the factors emphasized by Cowan (2005) in the Doctoral dissertation. However, if I consider the same factors that influenced the choice of corporate names, I need to analyze the naming practices adopted by companies nowadays. We believe IT companies have implemented more creative naming strategies which evoke broader meanings or associations, allowing them to adapt to technological breakthroughs and grow in a changing business environment. Looking into the current naming of companies in the IT sector I select two significant factors emphasized by Cowan (2005) that influence the creation of the current IT company names:

- Globalization: In the era of global e-commerce and transnationalism, IT&C companies must be strategic when selecting names that resonate across languages and cultures, catering to a diverse consumer base in Romania and abroad.

- Enhanced Customer Engagement: Due to the factors mentioned above, there is a growing necessity for companies to distinguish themselves from competitors. Many businesses now opt for company names that aim to establish emotional connections with consumers, as demonstrated by the scholars mentioned above. Moreover, they focus on the creation of names that carry more connotations and flexibility, for example, choosing a company name that does not offer hints about outdated products or technologies.

A recent study on 17 popular social media and messaging platform brand names emphasizes the trend of using fanciful names with semantic clues and re-naming strategies (Gerhards, 2023). Most of these brands create unique names to protect their identity, and these names often offer hints about the platform's content and incorporate hints from traditional media platform (Ibid.). For instance, TikTok suggests short videos, Snapchat implies raw snapshots, and Reddit indicates a text-based platform (Ibid.).

### **3. Naming of IT Services Companies – Analysis and Findings**

In these lines, I propose to examine names of companies that operate in the Romanian IT sector, a very dynamic sector with widely advertised products and services, in an effort to identify the naming practices. We carry on with the investigation of linguistic appropriateness and efficacy of the company names that operate in this sector. Moreover, I focus on the strengths and weaknesses regarding suggestiveness, memorability, connotations, etc. Data for this brief study have been drawn from The Manifest that lists 204 names of best IT companies operating in Romania. I have chosen the IT services companies based on the composition, descriptiveness and suggestiveness of their names. The study is not exhaustive as I have selected twenty-five simple and compound brand names to investigate. The



taxonomy of brand names used in marketing helped me to observe the naming practice and to identify the linguistic strategies employed in the creation of company names such as DATANEST, COSUMUS, SPLASHDEV, ARGGO CONSULTING, DOMINOBYTE, WHITECITY CODE, HARTMANN INDUSTRIES, GLOCAL SOFT and so on.

I examine these companies to find out why and how they chose the name of their business, focusing on the choice of the linguistic style which often depends on the positioning of the brand, target audience, and the message the brand wants to convey. Here are the linguistic strategies employed in naming the Romanian IT companies:

- The names are represented by English words and phrases (e.g. DATANEST, GLOCAL SOFT, SOFTELLIGENCE, ZENITH, UPDIVISION, MESHSOFTWARE, BEYOND ENTERPRIZES, BUSYMACHINES, COGNITIVE CREATORS, VISIONSEED, GOODROID, etc.) because IT related words have a global reach and they are often recognized and understood by people in various countries, even if they are not proficient in English. This recognition can make a company's name more accessible to a diverse range of customers. Also, having an English name can make it easier for IT companies to establish an online presence, to reach a global audience through their website and social media. Nowadays, many IT companies include a proactive dimension to tech developments in their English names so that they could communicate their brand values, new products, or services that meet the needs of a global audience.

- I have classified the selected IT company names taking into account their level of descriptiveness and suggestiveness. Most names are descriptive because they indicate the companies' major function. Other names are suggestive because they hint at the nature of a company's activity or at a dynamic and impactful presence on the IT services market. For example, DOMINO BYTE, ATLAS NETWORKING, COGNITIVE CREATORS, MESHSOFTWARE, GOODROID, DATANEST, DATAVID, etc. Some names are fanciful or contain a fanciful element that can render brand uniqueness and can increase brand memorability (e.g. COSUMUS, SHE GROUP or WHITECITY CODE). This categorization highlights that Romanian IT companies create unique and catchy names that can improve the companies' ranking in Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

- The analysis of the pronunciation, the phonetic elements and the overall sound of the selected IT company names shows that they are clear and easy to pronounce. However, some of them consist of clear and distinguishable sounds (e.g. DATANEST, ATLAS NETWORKING, FORT, SHE GROUP, CODE 932, DREAMLABS, DATAVID) while others include a combination of sounds, vowels and consonants (e.g. SPLASHDEV, CLOUDFINITY, ARGGO CONSULTING,

HARTMANN INDUSTRIES). WHITECITY CODE has a clear pronunciation even if it combines voiced and voiceless consonants.

- There are various strategies employed in the composition of the names and in word formation. Analyzing these strategies along with the strategies employed in semantics and meaning, we find that some names point to the companies' mission and vision. For example, the name GLOCAL SOFT combines a recognizable IT word, "SOFT", which migrated to the common language due to its frequency in the media, and the word "GLOCAL" which is a blend of "GLOBAL" and "LOCAL" to suggest the company has a global reach and local focus in providing software solutions. A similar name is SOFTELLIGENCE which is a blend of "SOFTWARE" and "INTELLIGENCE" indicating the company is involved in building services that enable business growth. HARTMANN INDUSTRIES combines the word "HARTMANN", a proper name, who is probably the founder of the company, with the word "INDUSTRIES", which is a recognizable term, with the purpose to create a compound term, which indicates the company's technical solutions to business problems. SPLASHDEV is composed of two parts frequently used in IT: "SPLASH" and "DEV". These parts form a compound word which suggests the company provides impactful software that helps companies achieve measurable results. DATANEST is composed of two words: the word "DATA", frequently used in IT contexts and research, and the word "NEST", which hints at a secure place or at the action of protecting business entities. These words are combined to create a compound word that suggests the company focuses on data collection and other trusted solutions. Other company names are represented by invented words that do not have a clear semantic meaning; for example, ARGGO CONSULTING consists of two words: "ARGGO" is an invented word that does not have a clear meaning and "CONSULTING" which reveals the company's expertise in business. I believe the choice of creating such company names sets the company apart from other companies as it is an original way to introduce a company that can be recognized more easily.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The process of choosing a brand name can be time-consuming and challenging but it's a critical aspect of building a successful brand. A well-chosen brand name and domain name can help the brand stand out from the crowd, connect with customers, and become a valuable asset over time. Although names play a crucial role in conveying information about products, services and companies to persuade consumers who can increase their sales, no research findings are available to date about IT brand names, especially about the naming conventions and linguistic strategies employed in creating the names of Romanian IT services companies. This

paper explores the naming strategies of 25 IT companies, relying on the taxonomy of brand names used in marketing. Specifically, we focus on the naming usages and on linguistic aspects related to morphology, word formation, phonetics, phonology, semantics and meaning. We placed the names in three categories, based on the level of descriptiveness, suggestiveness and fancifulness. Some names are descriptive, clearly indicating their purpose or service, while others are fanciful or suggestive, creating a sense of familiarity and creativity. As shown in the previous section, IT company names employ various strategies in name composition and word formation such as the proper names, compound words, invented words and combination of words which refer to interconnected solutions. The semantics and meaning of the names offer insights into the companies' missions and values. Some companies use IT words or combine words to establish the company name, while others blend or invent words to convey originality and to set the companies' names apart from other names of businesses. Also, the stress patterns in some names are impactful because they can maximize the memorability of IT company names.

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### **Corpus**

The Manifest <https://themanifest.com/ro/it-services/companies1864>.