

Business Names

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Abstract

This paper is a brief descriptive study of business names used in stores of a town (Tenkasi 627 811, Tamilnadu, India). The *bazaar* or in Tamil *kadaiththeru* has a few hundred stores, with signboards. Some stores do not have any signboard. The names of businesses and how these names and other details are engraved in the signboards offer insight into the business ideas of the owners of these stores. Also the practice of choosing and displaying the names also reveal both traditional and modern trends.

Keywords: business names, choice factors of business names, small towns, India

A *Bazaar* is a crowded street, with hundreds of shops on both the sides of the road -- this is the usual sight in small and big towns. Shops may be owned by single individuals, families or a team of friends, etc. The size of the shops may vary. “Big” stores may occupy large space. “Small” stores may occupy a few square feet. More often than not, most stores or shops tend to have their own signboards.

While sign boards may not be the main source of identify for the shops, these still do guide customers to the stores. People coming from villages or other towns do identify the specialty of the stores by quickly reading the sign boards. Usual and regular customers go straight to the particular store without looking for the signboards.

In addition to announcing the name of the store, the signboards do provide a variety of information to the customer. The religious background of the owner/s of the shop is revealed. Even within a particular religion, the preference for the deity, shows us to whom the owners pay obeisance. Often one finds the first line of the sign board could be a salutation to a deity. After this salutation, the name of the store is announced, followed by a line which could indicate the specialty of the store such as grocery, tailoring, medical supply and so on. Proprietor’s name could be the last item, followed by phone number these days.

Apart from announcing the business line, these boards also give our children a great opportunity to practice and improve their reading skills!

Name and description of the business is an important section. Appropriate choice of the terms for these items will help establish the name in the mind and memory of the customer. Cloth and saree stores have been greatly successful in creating long lasting impressions in the minds of the potential customers. We see this clearly in the preference of stores for the purchase of wedding sarees and other dresses! People come from hundreds of miles choosing to go to the particular stores of their choice. The name of the company/store becomes a great success.

Unfortunately this creates a tendency in new stores to imitate, copy and use such successful names as part of their names. *Saravana Bhavan* and *Ayyangar Bakery (Iyengar Bakery)* are copied/imitated more often to name new eateries. Interesting additions (prefixes), twist in spellings/letters, changes in the colour of the boards, etc. are seen in such efforts.

Perhaps the original businesses whose names are imitated/copied should feel proud that their names are copied. And yet in the business field, such imitations could mislead and distract the customers who intend to visit the original innovators of the trade names.

Some of these business names become generic, indicating the nature of the business. For example, the implication of the term *Ayyangar Bakery* could be, among other things, it is a vegetarian eatery.

Although there is great danger of imitation from others, a business should really be given an effective term which directly reveals the deliberations of the business explicitly. Ornamental language descriptions have become common additions to the business name when it comes to saree, clothing, garments, jewelry business, etc. in our surroundings. Explicit identity and description should be part of the business name.

Small businesses/stores may not go for trademark registration. But once the store becomes more popular, it becomes necessary to go in for trademark registration.

Numerology seems to play an important role in choosing and designing business names for some businesspersons. This could result in variation from normal spelling of the word/s involved. It could also result in increase or decrease of the letters in the name. Does such change contribute to specific and focused identity of the store? Some relevant interview with these business owners will be a relevant effort.

Names of characters of *puranas* are indeed popular. It may or may not reveal explicitly the content and deliberations of the business. However, names such as *Hanuman Store* or *Saraswathi Store* reveal the intent.

Apart from mythological characters, names of historical and political leaders also dominate in the choice of business names. It is unclear as to what extent choice of such names reveals the main or major focus of the business. Loyalty to and admiration for such characters on the part of the owners of the businesses perhaps determine choice of business names here. Customers who have strong political prejudice or bias may be guided by the choice of such names. Yet, if a “wrongly branded” store offers items not available readily elsewhere, and at a discounted rate, popularity of and preference for the store among the other stores may be retained.

While *Sakthi Masala* and *Aachi* are distinct trade names with established customers and patrons, the term *aachi* meaning “grandmother” or “grandma” in the southern districts of Tamilnadu has become a target of imitation, using the meaning and the variant word *paatti* or *paattiamma*.

In other words, imitations or variants of the older well-known business/trade names also encourage a variety of creativity.

A new effective business name is indeed hard to identify because there is great extension of small businesses all around and many effective trade names are already registered. Yet, we must recognize the fact that there is no limit to creativity!

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