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Language and Brand Recognition: An Investigation into Brand Naming Practices in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between linguistic characteristics and brand identification in the Vietnamese consumer market is investigated in this study. We conducted a survey of 89 Vietnamese consumers ($M_{age} = 34.7$, $SD = 12.3$) and examined 255 brand names (160 domestic, 95 international) using a mixed-methods approach. Four major language elements impact brand identity: sound symbolism, semantic/cultural meaning, uniqueness, brevity, and pronunciation ease. The results indicated that two to three-syllable names (74.1% of the sample) were more memorable ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.78$) than longer names ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.92$, $p < 0.01$). Names of Vietnamese origin generated more trust ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.75$) than foreign names ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.12$, $p < 0.001$). Semantic/cultural factors had the strongest influence on purchase intent. The best cultural fit ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.82$) and purchase intent ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.84$) were demonstrated by hybrid tactics for multinational companies that included Vietnamese characteristics with original names. Our research identifies the effects of interaction between linguistic and cultural components in brand identity and applies the notion of sound symbolism to tonal isolating languages. In addition to offering particular guidelines for successful brand name formation in line with Vietnamese language and cultural traits, this study gives an empirical framework for optimizing brand naming strategies in multilingual markets.

Keywords: Linguistic Marketing; Factor Analysis; Consumer Behavior; Mixed Techniques; Vietnamese Phonology; Branding; Sound Symbolism; Brand Identity

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1. Introduction

Every business sector needs to establish its brand because it represents an essential strategic necessity for market success in current competitive conditions. The brand name is the core element of brand identity because it determines consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. The brand name functions as the core element of brand identity, determining consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions, while operating as memory symbols that enable customers to identify products, maintain product awareness, and associate them with fundamental attributes, quality levels, and market standing. The Vietnamese market provides a unique setting in which to study brand names because it unites diverse languages and cultures with the development of a fusion of traditional and modern elements. The Vietnamese language structure with tones creates both benefits and hurdles that influence brand naming approaches. The single-syllable nature, along with six tones and special sound symbolism characteristics found in Vietnamese as an Indo-European language, affects both how people process brand names and their ability to remember them, as well as emotional brand name responses. Vietnam's accelerating economic development, alongside its increasing global market involvement, produces an energetic marketplace where domestic brands compete against international brands to win customer attention. The growing global importance of the Vietnamese market has not received adequate research about linguistic aspects of brand naming, although the market continues to expand. Our understanding of how these concepts operate in tonal language contexts remains minimal because prior research on sound symbolism and phonetic effects in brand names focused mainly on Western languages and markets.

The research explores how linguistic elements shape brand recognition among Vietnamese consumers. A mixed-methods research design evaluates two essential study areas through survey responses from 89 Vietnamese consumers and content analysis of 255 brand names.

(1) Which linguistic components play the most significant role in Vietnamese customers' ability to remember and identify a brand?

(2) How do brand names that use various linguistic techniques, including localization or the incorporation of

foreign features, affect Vietnamese consumers?

The research investigates essential linguistic features in Vietnamese-market brands and foreign brands available to Vietnamese consumers by studying phonological features and semantic elements together with cultural associations and sound symbolism. We analyze these elements to understand how Vietnamese consumers process linguistic traits in relation to brand recognition.

This research expands linguistic branding theories to tonal language situations and provides evidence-based recommendations for companies developing brand naming strategies for the Vietnamese market while offering potential applications to similar linguistic markets.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brand Concept and Brand Identity

According to Kohli & LaBahn, a brand is the set of characteristics, benefits, and values that a company creates to differentiate itself from other companies and to create a specific image in the consumer's mind^[1]. Brand identity is the set of tangible and intangible elements that a business uses to convey its personality and to make customers identify and recall it. Brand identity is crucial for conveying core values and differentiating a company from others in a market full of competitors, according to Alserhan & Alserhan^[2].

The brand name, logo, slogan, colors, packaging, and other communication components are the fundamental elements of brand identity. Among these, the brand name is the central element, capable of evoking immediate recognition and helping to establish a clear market position. Research by Duduciuc & Ivan shows that brand names have a direct impact on brand recall, recognition, and performance in the market^[3]. In the Vietnamese context, this recognition process is further complicated by the unique phonological features of the language, requiring specific considerations for brand development.

2.2. The Role of Language in Brand Building

Language plays an important role as a tool for brand identification and positioning. Linguistic elements help cus-

tomers easily associate with and remember a brand through sound, meaning, and name structure. Lowrey & Shrum have demonstrated that phonetic symbolism in brand names significantly influences consumer preferences, even when they are not consciously aware of it^[4]. This effect is particularly pronounced in tonal languages like Vietnamese, where pitch variations can create entirely different meanings and associations.

Yorkston and Menon's research on the phonology of brand names demonstrates that phonetics creates substantial emotional responses in consumers, which leads to changes in their attitudes and behaviors. The researchers found that brand name syllables and pronunciation patterns guide consumer purchasing decisions through their ability to create associations with product dimensions, weight, speed, and additional features^[5]. When applied to Vietnamese, these associations must account for the six tones that can alter meaning and perception significantly, adding complexity to brand name development.

Human working memory contains the phonological loop as a vital component that processes and retains short-term linguistic information. Zeroual found that brand names with syllable patterns matching customer linguistic characteristics lead to better memory retention and higher preference^[6]. For Vietnamese consumers, this suggests that brand names aligned with the monosyllabic structure common in Vietnamese language may enhance recall and recognition.

The research by Shrum et al. demonstrates that sound symbolism effects maintain consistency across different languages despite some variations due to linguistic and cultural factors^[7]. The findings have major implications for international brand naming strategies because they apply particularly to multilingual nations such as Vietnam.

2.3. Linguistic Characteristics Influencing Brand Names

The Vietnamese language offers advantages and disadvantages for brand branding because of its phonological characteristics including monosyllabic structure and unique tones. According to Moisescu & Gică, the phonological features of a language can create special opportunities and challenges for developing brand names that are easily identifiable^[8]. The six-tone system of Vietnamese (level, falling, rising, dipping-rising, creaky rising, and constricted) creates

a rich phonological landscape that can enhance brand distinctiveness but also increases complexity for non-native brands entering the market.

Research on sound symbolism and iconicity has revealed that these are universal linguistic phenomena, while their expressions vary according to the features of each language. In order to better understand how language establishes associations through sound, Erben and associates created a classification system for sound symbolism based on phonetic and semantic criteria^[9]. This is an important foundation for application in developing brand names with high evocative and impressive qualities.

Semantically, Vietnamese is rich in iconicity, sound symbolism, and cultural implications, allowing businesses to effectively leverage cultural and historical values in brand names to create familiarity and trust with customers. Basciano and Dao et al. demonstrates through his extensive linguistics research that brand names require social context, together with cultural components, to succeed^[10, 11]. The research by Huang & Chan demonstrates the importance of understanding cultural associations in language for marketing communication purposes when developing brands^[12].

Research by Topolinski et al. demonstrates that consumer preferences together with judgment improve when brand names are easy to pronounce^[13, 14]. The research becomes essential in tonal languages such as Vietnamese because pronunciation and tone changes significantly affect both meaning and perception.

The research by Hong et al. on brand name translation in Asian countries revealed that language constraints together with product characteristics and consumer sentiment formed the main factors affecting international brand name localization strategies^[15]. The research demonstrated that understanding local linguistic characteristics remains essential for introducing brand names into new markets. For Vietnam's rapidly developing market, this localization process must navigate between traditional linguistic preferences and increasing global influences.

De la Cova analyzed linguistic issues in brand localization, noting that maintaining brand identity while adapting to local language and culture is a major challenge for international businesses^[16]. This research also proposed strategies to resolve the conflict between global and local characteristics in brand naming. Furthermore, recent ex-

perimental research on Vietnamese phonological encoding has revealed that both onset effects and whole syllable effects emerge during language production, indicating that the fundamental phonological encoding unit is the phoneme despite Vietnamese's apparent similarities to Chinese^[17]. This finding has significant implications for brand naming strategies, as it suggests that Vietnamese consumers process brand names at the phonemic level, making individual sound choices particularly important for memorability and recognition. Additionally, research on Vietnamese consumer behavior toward Western brands has demonstrated that Vietnamese consumers attach symbolic meanings to foreign brands, particularly in technology, transport, and fashion categories, where brands are commonly used to help with image and identity creation^[18, 19]. The integration of traditional Vietnamese linguistic patterns with modern branding strategies therefore requires careful consideration of both phonological processing mechanisms and cultural symbolism to achieve optimal market penetration and consumer acceptance.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate the relationship between linguistic characteristics and brand identification in the Vietnamese market. The mixed-methods design integrates both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the complex interplay between language features and consumer perception. This approach allows for triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

3.2.1. Brand Name Data

Data from 255 well-known brand names in the Vietnamese market were gathered for the study, comprising 95 foreign brands (37.3%) and 160 native brands (62.7%). Purposive sampling was used to choose the brands according to three particular standards:

- Popularity level: In an initial poll of 50 customers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, brands must obtain a minimum of 60% brand awareness.

- Industry diversity: The sample encompasses eight major industries to ensure comprehensive market representation, including food and beverages (22.4%), electronics and home appliances (18.8%), banking and financial services (13.7%), fashion and cosmetics (15.3%), pharmaceuticals and healthcare (10.2%), telecommunications and technology (8.6%), retail (6.7%), and other services (4.3%). This distribution ensures the findings reflect diverse market segments rather than industry-specific patterns.

- Distinctive linguistic characteristics: Brands must clearly demonstrate at least one of the linguistic elements under study: sound symbolism, iconicity, cultural semantics, foreign elements, or a combination thereof. Each selected brand was independently verified by two linguistic experts to confirm the presence of these characteristics, ensuring objective selection criteria.

Brand name data were collected from multiple sources, including official business publications and surveys on brand awareness in Vietnam of Nielsen^[20]. Additional verification of brand characteristics was conducted through official company documentation and trademark registrations to ensure accuracy of classification.

3.2.2. Consumer Response Data

The study collected data from 89 consumers (45 male, 44 female), aged 18–65, residing in major cities (65.2%) and provinces (34.8%) of Vietnam. Data collection was conducted through two methods:

- Questionnaire survey: The questionnaire was designed based on previously validated scales on phonetic symbolism by Yorkston & Menon^[5], and brand memorability by Lowrey & Shrum^[4]. 32 questions made up the survey, which assessed five factors: purchase intention, product connection, evoked emotions, memorability, and recognition ability. All survey items used a 5-point Likert scale and were pilot-tested with 15 respondents to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 for internal consistency.

- In-depth interviews: To elucidate psychological responses, associations, and the rationale behind the quantitative assessments, 25 in-depth interviews (each lasting 45–60 minutes) were carried out with consumers chosen from the survey sample. For analysis, interviews were classified based on key topics after being recorded and transcribed. Interviewees were selected using maximum variation sampling to

ensure diverse perspectives across demographic variables and initial survey responses.

3.3. Data Analysis Methods

In order to process the varied data gathered, this study used a combination of sophisticated analytical techniques:

3.3.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

- Content analysis: In order to achieve inter-rater reliability (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.87$), brand names were subjected to a thorough qualitative content analysis with the participation of three independent language specialists^[21]. In order to identify important linguistic elements, such as phonological characteristics (number of syllables, tones, and rhymes), sound symbolism and iconicity, semantics and cultural implications, and Vietnamese, foreign, or hybrid elements, the analysis process involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding^[22].

- Discourse analysis: To find trends in customer attitudes, perceptions, and actions regarding various brand names, data from in-depth interviews were subjected to thematic discourse analysis^[23]. Data from interviews was coded and analyzed using NVivo 14.

3.3.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

- The fundamental statistical parameters (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) of study variables are calculated through descriptive statistical analysis.

- Multiple regression analysis evaluates the assumptions of several linear regression models (linearity, homoscedasticity, and normal distribution of residuals) to determine the effect of each linguistic element on brand recognition ability.

- The method of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) uses factor analysis with varimax rotation to identify the fundamental linguistic factors that affect brand identification.

- The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tool enables researchers to examine assessment variations between purely Vietnamese brand names and foreign brand names and hybrid brand names.

- All quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28.0 while the statistical significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.3.3. Integration of Analysis Results

The “data transformation process” model, which quantified qualitative data and quantitative data to cross-reference, compare, and complement one another, was used to combine the results of qualitative and quantitative analyses^[24]. This integration followed a sequential explanatory design where quantitative results were first analyzed, followed by qualitative analysis to provide deeper insights into the statistical findings. The integration process occurred at three levels:

- Data integration: Quantitative brand name characteristics were matched with qualitative consumer perceptions to identify patterns.

- Methodological integration: Survey results were used to structure and refine interview questions, creating an iterative analytical process.

- Interpretative integration: Findings from both approaches were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of linguistic brand effects in the Vietnamese context.

The integration matrices approach combining conclusions from both data sources, which improved the thoroughness and depth of the study conclusions^[25]. This matrix approach enabled systematic comparison between linguistic features identified in content analysis and consumer responses from both surveys and interviews, strengthening the validity of findings through methodological triangulation.

3.4. Research Ethics

The research adhered to ethical standards of social research by obtaining voluntary consent from participants and safeguarding their personal information while restricting data usage to research purposes only.

4. Research Results

4.1. Linguistic Characteristics of Brand Names in the Vietnamese Market

4.1.1. Phonological Characteristics in Brand Names

The research of 255 brand names shows that phonological characteristics influence brand name structure in the Vietnamese market. The phonological characteristics of the research sample are presented in **Table 1** through their fre-

quency distribution.

Table 1 represents the distribution of syllable counts across the sampled brand names, highlighting the predominance of shorter names in the Vietnamese market.

The majority of brand names contain two to three syllables (74.1%) which aligns with Vietnamese language preferences for short and easy-to-remember terms.

ANOVA results indicate that brand recognition levels vary significantly between groups containing names based on syllable count ($F(2,252) = 8.74, p < 0.01$). The brand name recognition ratings for two to three-syllable names

average 4.12 (SD = 0.78), while the names with four or more syllables have an average of 3.45 (SD = 0.92).

4.1.2. Semantic and Onomatopoeic Characteristics in Brand Names

Table 2 displays the findings of an analysis of the semantic properties and onomatopoeic/ideographic components of brand names.

Table 2 emphasizes the prevalence of meaningful and phonetically symbolic brand naming strategies, providing a clear snapshot of current naming practices in the Vietnamese

Table 1. Phonological Characteristics in Vietnamese Brand Names (N = 255).

Phonological Characteristic	Number	Percentage (%)	Example Brand Names
<i>Number of syllables</i>			
1 syllable	30	11.8	Việt, Sen, Ô
2-3 syllables	189	74.1	Vinamilk, Hào Hào, Bitis
4 syllables or more	36	14.1	Điện Máy Xanh, Trà Thanh Nhiệt Dr Thanh
Total	255	100	
<i>Tone characteristics</i>			
Easy-to-pronounce tones	204	80.0	Bảo Việt, Minh Long, Cô Gái Hà Lan
Difficult-to-pronounce tones	51	20.0	Thế Giới Di Động, VietBrother, LienVietPostBank
Total	255	100	
<i>Rhyme</i>			
Has rhyme/sound repetition	86	33.7	Chin-su, Omo, Milo, Bibica
No rhyme	169	66.3	FPT, Vissan, Suntory PepsiCo
Total	255	100	

Table 2. Semantic and Onomatopoeic Characteristics in Vietnamese Brand Names (N = 255).

Linguistic Element	Number	Percentage (%)	Example Brand Names
<i>Onomatopoeic/ideographic characteristics</i>			
Clear onomatopoeia	112	43.9	Ting Ting, Chin-su, Omo
Ideographic	62	24.3	Rạng Đông, Highlands Coffee
No onomatopoeic/ideographic characteristics	81	31.8	Vietcombank, MobiFone
Total	255	100	
<i>Semantic characteristics</i>			
Clear meaning	195	76.5	Trà Xanh Không Độ, Thế Giới Di Động
Abstract/suggestive meaning	42	16.5	TH True Milk, Vingroup
No specific meaning	18	7.0	MXP, K+
Total	255	100	
<i>Language origin</i>			
Pure Vietnamese	153	60.0	Thiên Long, Kinh Đô, Bảo Việt
Foreign	64	25.1	Samsung, Oppo, Louis Vuitton
Hybrid	38	14.9	Vietjet Air, VinFast, SaigonCoop
Total	255	100	

market.

The research shows that 68.2% of brand names incorporate onomatopoeic or ideographic elements in their naming strategy. Regarding semantic characteristics, most brand

names (76.5%) have clear meanings, helping consumers easily associate with product or service characteristics.

Multiple regression analysis shows that onomatopoeic elements have a positive correlation with brand memorabil-

ity ($\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$), and clear meaning elements have a significant impact on product positioning capability ($\beta = 0.53, p < 0.001$).

4.1.3. Relationship Between Linguistic Factors and Brand Characteristics

As shown in **Figure 1**, the findings of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed four major factor groups in the linguistic traits of brand names.

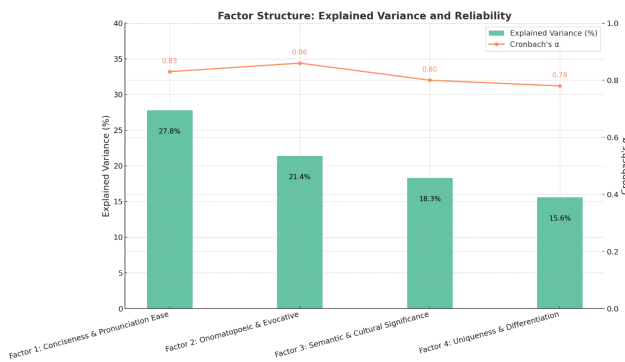


Figure 1. Factor Analysis Results of Linguistic Elements in Brand Names (N = 255).

Notes: Principal component analysis; Rotation method; Varimax with Kaiser normalization; KMO.

Figure 1 illustrates the variance explained by each factor, with conciseness and ease of pronunciation emerging as the dominant factor. This visual representation allows readers to quickly grasp the relative importance of each linguistic element in the Vietnamese brand landscape.

The factor analysis produced four major sets of factors which together explained 83.1% of the variance indicating the model's strong explanatory power. The criteria "Conciseness and ease of pronunciation" contributed the most (27.8%) to the findings and emphasizes the importance of phonological elements in Vietnamese brand names.

4.2. Vietnamese Consumers' Reactions and Evaluations

4.2.1. Level of Recognition and Evaluation of Brand Names

Figure 2 displays the findings of a survey conducted among 89 consumers about their level of brand name familiarity and appraisal.

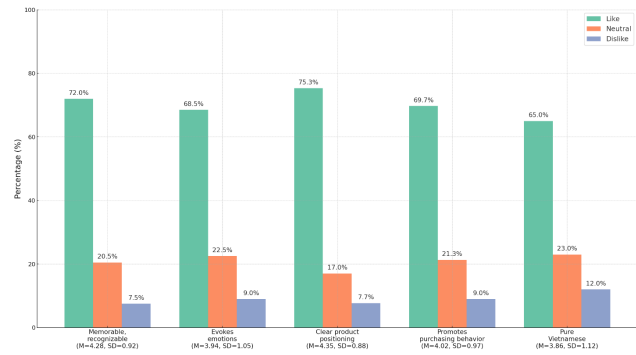


Figure 2. Vietnamese Consumers' Reactions to Brand Name Elements (N = 89).

Notes: 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly dislike, 5 = Strongly like.

Figure 2 enables comparison of consumer preferences across multiple brand attributes, highlighting the prominence of clear positioning and memorability as key factors in consumer evaluation.

The findings indicate that brand names with "Clear product positioning" (75.3% like, M = 4.35) and "Memorable, recognizable" (72.0% like, M = 4.28) are highly valued by Vietnamese consumers. These are the two most important factors in brand name evaluation.

4.2.2. Impact of Linguistic Characteristics on Consumer Evaluation

To determine the degree of influence of linguistic characteristics on consumer evaluation, the study conducted multiple regression analysis with results presented in **Figure 3**.

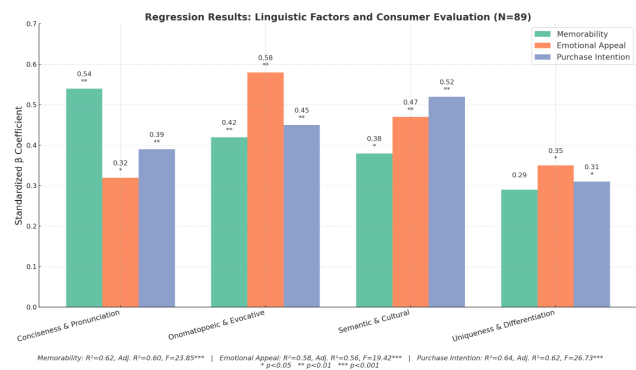


Figure 3. Regression Analysis Results of Linguistic Factors Influencing Consumer Evaluation.

The regression analysis visualization presents standardized beta coefficients for each linguistic factor across differ-

ent consumer evaluation dimensions. This format effectively communicates the complex relationships between linguistic features and consumer responses, enabling strategic decision-making for brand developers.

The regression analysis results show that all four linguistic factors have positive and statistically significant impacts on consumer evaluation. The component “Conciseness and ease of pronunciation” has the largest effect on “Memorability” ($\beta = 0.54, p < 0.001$). The factors “Onomatopoeic and evocative quality” and “Semantic and cultural significance” have the largest effects on “Emotional appeal” ($\beta = 0.58, p < 0.001$) and “Purchase intention” ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$), respectively. The excellent explanatory power of all regression models (R^2 ranges from 0.58 to 0.64) shows that linguistic characteristics influence consumer perception of brand names.

4.2.3. Comparison of Reactions to Different Brand Name Groups

The analysis employed one-way ANOVA to study consumer responses across different brand name groups which produced the results presented in **Figure 4**.

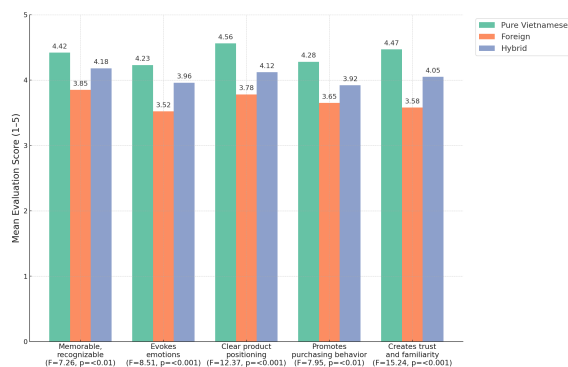


Figure 4. Comparison of Consumer Reactions to Different Brand Name Groups (N = 89).

Notes: 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very low, 5 = Very high.

Figure 4 clearly demonstrates the performance differences between pure Vietnamese, hybrid, and foreign brand names across multiple consumer evaluation dimensions. The visual format facilitates quick identification of areas where domestic brands outperform international competitors, providing valuable strategic insights.

Consumer responses to the three brand name groups vary, according to the ANOVA results. In particular, “Clear product positioning” ($M = 4.56$ vs. $M = 3.78, p < 0.001$) and “Creating trust and familiarity” ($M = 4.47$ vs. $M = 3.58,$

$p < 0.001$) are the two areas where pure Vietnamese brand names are scored higher than foreign brand names.

The strategy of mixing indigenous and international aspects can be a balanced choice, especially for firms that wish to portray modernity and internationalism while still keeping Vietnamese identity, as indicated by the intermediate ratings of hybrid brand names.

4.3. Common Brand Naming Trends and Practices in Vietnam

4.3.1. Common Brand Naming Strategies

The analysis results presented in **Figure 5** reveal multiple brand naming approaches that operate within the Vietnamese market.

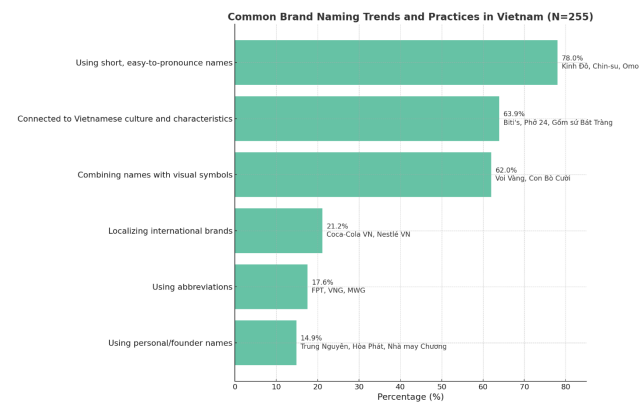


Figure 5. Common Brand Naming Trends and Practices in Vietnam (N = 255).

This visual representation maps the prevalence of different brand naming strategies in the Vietnamese market, providing marketers with a clear picture of established practices and potential differentiation opportunities.

The analysis reveals that the most frequently used technique is “short, easy-to-pronounce names” (78.0%), followed by “connected to Vietnamese culture and characteristics” (63.9%) and “combining names with visual symbols” (62.0%). Marketing specialists confirm this pattern through in-depth interviews because Vietnamese consumers prefer familiar and simple branding that connects to their local culture.

4.3.2. Analysis of Naming Strategies by Industry

Table 3 displays the findings of the study’s research on the distribution of brand naming techniques by industry.

Table 3. Distribution of Brand Naming Strategies by Industry.

Industry	Short Names	Cultural Connection	Onomatopoeic/Ideographic	Pure Vietnamese	Foreign/Hybrid
Food-beverages (n=57)	82.5	77.2	75.4	68.4	31.6
Electronics-appliances (n=48)	75.0	47.9	58.3	41.7	58.3
Finance-banking (n=35)	65.7	74.3	51.4	85.7	14.3
Fashion-cosmetics (n=39)	84.6	46.2	79.5	38.5	61.5
Pharmaceuticals-healthcare (n=26)	69.2	65.4	50.0	73.1	26.9
Telecommunications-technology (n=22)	86.4	50.0	54.5	45.5	54.5
Retail (n=17)	82.4	70.6	58.8	64.7	35.3
Other services (n=11)	72.7	54.5	63.6	54.5	45.5
Total (N=255)	78.0	63.9	68.2	60.0	40.0

Table 3 provides sector-specific insights into naming practices, revealing significant variations across industries. The tabular format enables efficient comparison of multiple variables across different sectors, highlighting industry-specific patterns that would be difficult to discern from text alone.

The research shows that different businesses use brand-name techniques in different ways. The food and beverage business uses the most onomatopoeic/ideographic features (75.4%) and cultural connections (77.2%) because it needs to create visual associations and familiarity with consumers. The finance-banking sector, which is focused on prestige and local market ties, has the largest number of pure Vietnamese names (85.7%). The fashion-cosmetics sector has the highest number of foreign or hybrid names (61.5%), which is in line with the industry's modernism and trend towards globalization.

4.3.3. Correlation Model Between Naming Strategy and Brand Effectiveness

The research analyzed the connection between naming strategies and brand efficacy by correlating brand awareness data from Nielsen surveys with brand favorability data from

this study's survey. The correlation analysis results show that naming strategies have a strong relationship with brand effectiveness. The correlation between "Conciseness and ease of pronunciation" and "Awareness level" reaches its highest value at $r = 0.62$ ($p < 0.001$), and the correlation between "Semantic and cultural significance" and "Purchase intention" reaches its highest value at $r = 0.65$ ($p < 0.001$).

4.4. In-depth Analysis of the Impact of Specific Linguistic Factors

4.4.1. Impact of Tonal Characteristics on Consumer Perception

The study conducted a comparative analysis of brand name groups classified by tonal characteristics to better understand the impact of tonal characteristics in Vietnamese on consumer perception. The results are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4 examines the unique impact of Vietnamese tonal characteristics on consumer perceptions, providing novel insights specific to tonal languages. The clear mean comparison across multiple perception dimensions offers valuable guidance for brand name phonological design in

Table 4. Impact of Tonal Characteristics on Consumer Perception (N = 89).

Tonal Characteristic	Memorability M (SD)	Perception of Professionalism M (SD)	Perception of Friendliness M (SD)	Purchase Intention M (SD)
Level tone (n=78)	4.28 (0.86)	4.15 (0.92)	3.87 (1.03)	3.94 (0.89)
Falling tone (n=45)	4.12 (0.93)	3.85 (0.97)	4.36 (0.82)	4.10 (0.88)
Rising tone (n=81)	4.35 (0.79)	4.28 (0.83)	3.76 (0.95)	4.05 (0.90)
Dipping tone (n=21)	3.72 (1.05)	3.64 (1.08)	3.92 (0.96)	3.68 (1.03)
Rising-glottalized tone (n=16)	3.58 (1.12)	3.52 (1.15)	3.74 (1.02)	3.55 (1.09)
Heavy tone (n=14)	3.45 (1.18)	3.48 (1.12)	3.64 (1.08)	3.52 (1.14)
F	8.73	7.95	5.82	4.46
p	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.01

Notes: T5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very low, 5 = Very high.

the Vietnamese market.

The analysis results show differences in consumer perception of brand names with different tonal characteristics. Specifically, brand names with rising tones are rated highest for “Memorability” (M = 4.35) and “Perception of professionalism” (M = 4.28). Brand names with falling tones are rated highest for “Perception of friendliness” (M = 4.36) and “Purchase intention” (M = 4.10).

Conversely, brand names with heavy tones, rising-glottalized tones, and dipping tones have significantly lower ratings across all aspects. This result aligns with the phonological characteristics of Vietnamese, where level tones,

falling tones, and rising tones are usually easier to pronounce and create a more pleasant sound.

4.4.2. Analysis of the Impact of Rhyme and Sound Repetition

The study conducted a comparative analysis of the impact of different types of rhyme and sound repetition on brand names. The results are presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5 effectively communicates how different sound patterns influence consumer perceptions, highlighting the significant performance gap between rhyming and non-rhyming brand names across multiple dimensions.

Table 5. Impact of Rhyme and Sound Repetition on Consumer Perception (N = 89).

Rhyme Characteristic	Memorability M (SD)	Creates Positive Emotions M (SD)	Humor/Playfulness M (SD)	Purchase Intention M (SD)
Initial sound repetition (n=32)	4.42 (0.78)	4.15 (0.86)	4.28 (0.82)	4.03 (0.91)
Final sound repetition (n=24)	4.18 (0.92)	3.92 (0.94)	3.85 (0.98)	3.86 (0.95)
Simple rhyme (n=30)	4.35 (0.82)	4.05 (0.88)	3.76 (1.02)	3.97 (0.90)
No rhyme (n=169)	3.65 (1.07)	3.47 (1.12)	3.25 (1.15)	3.58 (1.05)
F	9.84	7.52	10.36	4.87
p	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.01

Notes: 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very low, 5 = Very high.

The results show that brand names with rhyme and sound repetition elements are rated significantly higher than names without rhyme. In particular, brand names with initial sound repetition (such as “Chin-su” and “Coca-Cola”) are rated highest for “Memorability” (M = 4.42) and “Humor/playfulness” (M = 4.28).

This analysis aligns with Yorkston and Menon’s sound symbolism theory^[5], showing that sound structure has a significant impact on consumer perception and memorability.

4.4.3. Influence of Cultural Elements in Brand Names

The study evaluated the influence of different types of cultural elements used in brand names in Vietnam. The

results are presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6 quantifies the impact of various cultural elements on brand perception dimensions, revealing the substantial advantage that culturally relevant naming provides in the Vietnamese market. The organized format enables quick identification of the most effective cultural elements for specific brand objectives.

The analysis results show that brand names with Vietnamese cultural elements are rated higher on all aspects compared to names without clear cultural elements. In particular, brand names using historical/cultural figure names score highest on “Trustworthiness” (M = 4.52), “National pride” (M = 4.68), and “Purchase intention” (M = 4.32).

Table 6. Influence of Cultural Elements in Brand Names on Consumer Perception (N = 89).

Cultural Element	Trustworthiness M (SD)	National Pride M (SD)	Sense of Familiarity M (SD)	Purchase Intention M (SD)
Vietnamese place names (n=42)	4.38 (0.82)	4.53 (0.75)	4.42 (0.80)	4.25 (0.86)
Historical/cultural figure names (n=28)	4.52 (0.74)	4.68 (0.62)	4.35 (0.78)	4.32 (0.79)
Traditional vocabulary (n=53)	4.25 (0.89)	4.42 (0.81)	4.48 (0.75)	4.18 (0.88)
Cultural symbols (n=40)	4.32 (0.85)	4.45 (0.78)	4.38 (0.82)	4.15 (0.92)
No clear cultural element (n=92)	3.58 (1.08)	3.32 (1.12)	3.65 (1.05)	3.72 (1.03)
F	12.53	24.85	10.74	5.36

Notes: 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very low, 5 = Very high.

In-depth interviews with consumers show that brand names associated with familiar cultural elements create feelings of familiarity, pride, and trust. One participant shared: “When I see a brand name associated with a Vietnamese place name or historical figure, I feel closer and more trusting, and also want to support it out of national pride.”

4.5. Analysis of International Brand Name Localization Strategies in Vietnam

Methods of Localizing International Brand Names

The study analyzed 95 international brands in the research sample to identify common localization methods. The results are presented in **Figure 6**.

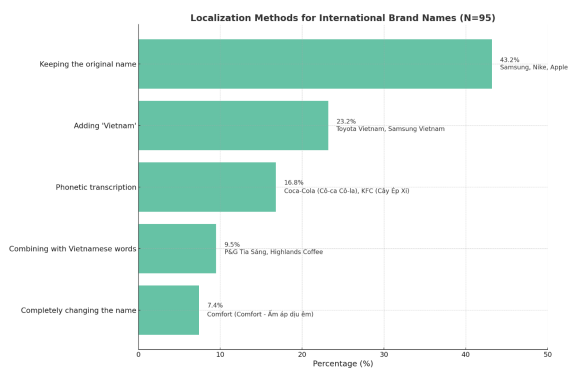


Figure 6. Methods of Localizing International Brand Names in Vietnam (N = 95).

This visualization maps the distribution of localization strategies employed by international brands in Vietnam, providing multinational companies with clear benchmarks for their market entry and adaptation planning.

Figure 6 shows that the most common localization method is “Keeping the original name” (43.2%), followed by “Adding Vietnam” (23.2%) and “Phonetic transcription into Vietnamese” (16.8%). Deeper analysis shows that the localization strategy often depends on the industry, scale, and global strategy of the brand.

5. Discussion

5.1. Significance of Research Results

The research results have confirmed the central role of linguistic factors in building brand identity in the Vietnamese consumer market. Consumers’ high evaluation of brand names that are concise, easy to pronounce, and have clear

meaning aligns with sound symbolism theory and Yorkston & Menon’s studies on the impact of phonetics on consumer perception^[4, 5]. However, this study extends this theory in the context of tonal isolating languages like Vietnamese, where phonological characteristics play a more complex role compared to previous studies focusing on Indo-European languages.

The finding of a strong correlation between conciseness and brand memorability ($\beta = 0.54, p < 0.001$) supports the phonological loop theory in Baddeley & Hitch’s working memory model^[26]. According to this theory, linguistic information is stored in short-term memory with limited capacity. Thus, shorter brand names occupy less processing space and are easier to remember. This explains why brand names with 2–3 syllables ($M = 4.12, SD = 0.78$) were rated significantly higher in memorability compared to those with 4 or more syllables ($M = 3.45, SD = 0.92, p < 0.01$).

Results regarding the influence of tones (with level tone, falling tone, and rising tone being preferred) expand our understanding of sound symbolism in tonal languages, adding to Shrum et al.’s research on cross-linguistic sound symbolism effects^[7]. However, unlike previous studies that mainly focused on phonology, this research also discovered the special importance of cultural factors ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$) for purchase intention, revealing the complex interaction between linguistics and culture in branding.

Vietnamese consumers’ preference for pure Vietnamese brand names or those skillfully combining foreign elements reflects the characteristics of a society in the process of globalization while maintaining a strong cultural identity. This result aligns with De la Cova’s and Hong et al.’s research on the tension between globality and locality in branding strategies in emerging markets^[15, 16].

5.2. Suggestions for Businesses and Brand Strategy

Based on the results obtained, the study proposes several important suggestions for naming and brand-building strategies in the Vietnamese market:

5.2.1. Implications for Domestic Vietnamese Companies

First, businesses should prioritize short brand names (2–3 syllables), easy to pronounce, and use pleasant tones

(level tone, falling tone, rising tone). The basic syllable pattern functions to boost brand memory ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.92$) and produces positive consumer comfort. Successful brands such as “Bào Việt”, “Vinamilk”, and “Chin-su” apply this principle.

Second, the integration of onomatopoeic and ideographic elements in brand names increases emotional appeal ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$) and impressions. In particular, alliteration (like “Chin-su” and “Coca-Cola”) shows high effectiveness in creating memorability ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.78$) and humor/playfulness ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.82$). Businesses can apply this strategy to create unique sonic highlights for their brands.

Third, the connection with Vietnamese culture can increase trust and brand closeness. Cultural elements such as Vietnamese place names ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.82$ for trust), historical/cultural figures ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.74$), or traditional vocabulary ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.75$ for a sense of closeness) all have positive impacts. Businesses should consider integrating these elements into brand strategy, especially in industries like finance-banking and food-beverages, where trust and closeness play important roles.

Domestic companies can leverage their inherent advantage in cultural authenticity, as demonstrated by the significantly higher trust ratings for Vietnamese brand names ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.75$) compared to foreign names ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.12$, $p < 0.001$). This advantage is particularly valuable in industries where trust is paramount, such as finance, healthcare, and food production.

5.2.2. Implications for International Companies

For international brands, the strategy of “combining original names with Vietnamese words” ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.84$ for purchase intention) or “phonetic transcription into Vietnamese” ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.88$ for preference) is more effective than keeping the original name unchanged ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.02$). This strategy creates a balance between maintaining a global brand identity and adapting to the local market.

International companies entering the Vietnamese market face a clear strategic choice based on our findings. While maintaining global brand consistency through unchanged names is the most common approach (43.2% of international brands), our consumer evaluation data suggests this may not

be optimal. The significantly higher cultural fit ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.82$) and purchase intent ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.84$) for hybrid approaches indicate that multinational corporations should consider partial adaptation strategies.

The cross-industry analysis reveals sector-specific considerations for international brands. In fashion and electronics (with 61.5% and 58.3% foreign/hybrid names, respectively), Vietnamese consumers already expect and accept foreign elements. However, in finance-banking and food-beverages (with only 14.3% and 31.6% foreign/hybrid names), international companies may need more extensive localization to overcome strong domestic brand advantage.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite achieving many valuable results, this study still has some limitations that need to be addressed in future research:

First, the consumer sample size ($n = 89$) is relatively small and focused mainly on major cities, thus not fully reflecting the geographic and cultural diversity of Vietnam’s regions. Future studies should expand the survey’s scale and scope, including rural areas and regions with different cultural and linguistic characteristics.

Second, the current study focuses on consumers’ immediate reactions to brand names without evaluating the long-term impact on actual purchasing behavior. A longitudinal study tracking the relationship between brand name evaluation and purchasing behavior over time would provide deeper insights into the actual effectiveness of naming strategies.

Third, the study has not fully integrated visual elements (such as logos, packaging design) with linguistic elements, while in reality, consumers often encounter brands through a combination of multiple sensory channels. Future studies need to use a multimodal approach to examine the interaction between linguistic and non-linguistic elements in brand identity.

Fourth, with technological development, neuromarketing methods such as electroencephalogram (EEG), eye-tracking, or functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) could offer more detailed insights into unconscious reactions and linguistic information processing mechanisms of consumers regarding brand names.

Subsequent studies could extend the analytical framework to include cross-cultural comparisons between the Vietnamese market and other markets in Southeast Asia or Asia, in order to identify similarities and differences in the influence of linguistic factors on cross-border cultural brand identity.

Finally, the rapid pace of digital transformation in Vietnam's consumer landscape may influence how brand names are encountered and processed. The current study does not account for potential differences in brand name perception between traditional and digital contexts, a limitation that future research should address as e-commerce and social media increasingly dominate consumer-brand interactions.

6. Conclusions

The study has highlighted the important role of linguistic factors in building brand identity in the Vietnamese market. Four main groups of linguistic factors were identified: conciseness and ease of pronunciation, onomatopoeic and evocative quality, semantic and cultural significance, and uniqueness and differentiation. Among these, semantic and cultural significance had the strongest impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$).

Vietnamese phonological characteristics significantly influence brand recognition, with concise brand names (2–3 syllables) and pleasant tones (level tone, falling tone, rising tone) rated higher for memorability. Vietnamese consumers favor pure Vietnamese brand names or those skillfully combining Vietnamese and foreign elements, especially names connected to indigenous cultural elements.

For international brands, the strategy of “combining original names with Vietnamese words” yields the best results in terms of cultural fit ($M = 4.32$) and purchase intention ($M = 4.25$). This result emphasizes the importance of cultural adaptation in global brand strategy.

The findings of this study significantly extend existing theoretical frameworks in several ways. First, our results confirm and extend sound symbolism theory by demonstrating its application in tonal language contexts, a previously underexplored area in brand linguistics research. The strong correlation between tonal characteristics and consumer perception (with rising tones scoring highest for professionalism, $M = 4.28$, and falling tones for friendliness, $M = 4.36$) provides empirical support for Shrum et al.'s proposition that

sound symbolism effects persist across linguistic boundaries, while adding critical nuance regarding how these effects manifest in tonal languages^[7].

Second, our research advances the understanding of Baddeley & Hitch's working memory model in cross-cultural contexts by demonstrating how the phonological loop processes tonal information in brand names^[26]. The significant performance advantage of two-to-three syllable names ($M = 4.12$ vs. $M = 3.45$ for longer names, $p < 0.01$) aligns with memory constraints identified in cognitive psychology, while extending this knowledge to Vietnamese linguistic structures.

Third, the study bridges linguistic theory with cultural branding research by quantifying the interplay between language elements and cultural associations. The finding that cultural elements generate significantly higher trust ($M = 4.52$ for historical/cultural figure names) and purchase intent advances De la Cova's theoretical work on the tension between global standardization and local adaptation in international branding^[16].

Despite limitations in sample size and geographic scope, the study has extended sound symbolism theory in the context of tonal languages and provided an empirical analytical framework for brand naming strategies in multilingual markets. Businesses should prioritize brand names that are concise, easy to pronounce, and align with Vietnamese linguistic and cultural characteristics to enhance recognition and create emotional connections with consumers.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, T.T.M.L.; methodology, T.T.M.L.; formal analysis, T.T.M.L. and H.Q.N.; investigation, T.T.M.L.; data curation, H.Q.N.; writing—original draft preparation, T.T.M.L.; writing—review & editing, H.Q.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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