TWO SKETCHES ON LATVIAN NAMES IN THE ECONOMY

Laimute BALODE, **Ojārs BUŠS**
University of Latvia, Riga

Abstract

In the last decade the research of the names in the economy has got quite a respectable position in the field of onomastic disciplines. Mainly the names of companies, enterprises and other businesses (*ergonyms*) as well as the names of products (*pragmatonyms*) are considered to be names in the economy. Probably the close relation to business and other practical issues is the reason why in quite many countries the research of names in the economy is now carried out on a regular basis, and an international symposium *Names in the Economy* is regularly held every three years (the fourth symposium was held in 2012 in Turku, Finland, and the fifth will take place in 2015 in Verona, Italy).

However Latvian names in the economy are still researched quite scarcely: only a couple of publications and abstracts are to be mentioned (Laugale, 2009; 2012; Balode, 2012; Bušs 2012). We hope the two sketches presented now to your attention would give an insight in some interesting particularities of Latvian ergonyms and pragmatonyms.

Key words: *economy*, *ergonyms*, *pragmatonyms*, *Latvian*, *particularities*

Résumé

Durant la récente décennie, la recherche scientifique au sujet des dénominations choisies dans la sphère de l'économie en est venue à acquérir une position digne de respect dans le champ des disciplines onomastiques. Les dénominations choisies pour des compagnies, des entreprises et pour d'autres genres d'affaires (les *ergonymes*) ainsi que les dénominations attribuées aux produits eux-mêmes qui résultent des activités respectives (les *pragmatonymes*) sont censées, à l'intérieur de la sphère économique, d'équivaloir à des noms propres; c'est bien là le phénomène linguistique faisant l'objet du présent ouvrage. Dans beaucoup de pays, la recherche scientifique portant sur les dénominations attribuées dans la sphère économique est maintenant poursuivie à dessein et un symposium international avec le titre *Dénominations en Économie* a lieu une fois tous les trois ans (la quatrième de ces réunions aura été tenue en 2012 à Turku, en Finlande, alors que la cinquième est prévue pour 2015 à Verona, en Italie. Sans doute la raison d'un tel développement est-elle l'étroite liaison où lesdites dénominations se trouvent d'avec le milieu d'affaires en général et aussi bien avec d'autres questions de nature hautement pratique. Pourtant, en Lettonie, l'étude consacrée aux dénominations choisies dans la sphère de l'économie est encore pauvre; à peine pouvons-nous faire mention d'un très petit nombre de publications et de résumés (Laugale, 2009, 2012; Balode 2012; Buss 2012). Nous espérons que les deux esquisses que nous soumettons maintenant à votre attention pourront éveiller votre intérêt au sujet de quelques intéressantes particularités des ergonymes et des pragmatonymes Lettons.

Mots-clés: *économie*, *ergonymes*, *pragmatonymes*, *Letton*, *caractères*

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I. *Latvia* and *Riga* as the names of commercial products and companies

0. Introduction

There are about 204,777 companies registered in Latvia (data of May 2013) (http://www.lursoft.lv/lursoft-statistika/LR-Uznemumu-registra-registros-registreto-un-likvideto-subjektu-skaits&id=2)

In general, companies, firms and institutions in Latvia have freedom to choose their name according to their needs and wishes. The only restriction – the name has to be in Latvian or at least has to be written in Latin alphabet. The official and shortened forms in company names should be created in the official state language – thus Latvian – in accordance with the orthography rules of standard Latvian. Commercial Law in Latvia has set such restrictions for the choice of the name: 1) a firm is not allowed to include the words *Latvijas Republika* 'Republic of Latvia' and its translation into a foreign language; 2) the company's name shall not coincide with the name of the administrative area, or name of the settlement, except for the names of farmsteads; 3) a firm is not allowed to include names of state or local government institutions as well as the word *state* or *government*[1]. The phrase *Republic of Latvia*, and its abbreviation, LR, are used only by state and administration authorities in their names.

The name of the country or administrative area is not allowed to be used in the Nominative case, for instance, it cannot be an ergonym *Latvija* or *Rīga*, but can be used in other cases[2]. Besides that, the word *Latvia* or its abbreviation is not allowed to be included into the brand name, if the name may cause undesirable associations.

According to Paula Sjőblom (2005: 268), company names have at least the following functions: a) personifying function, b) separating function, c) persuading function, d) socio-culturally integrative function. All these functions are well-known in each language, also in Latvian.

One has to fully agree with Reina Boerrigter (2007: 53) that the name is a key element of a company's identity and is part of the business identity. The main function of the name of the company is to identify itself, but it is also very important to provide the information about the location, different from other similar companies (see Sjőblom, 2005: 271). The usage of the name of the country (Latv. *Latvija*/Eng. *Latvia*) and the name of the capital (Latv. *Rīga*/Eng. *Rīga*) included in company names among other functions should show the location and in such a way inform the society and possible clients.

It is of great importance what a company wants to display to its environment. Using the name of a province can be a way to improve a possible image – these business names show that the company is strongly attached to the province (Boerrigter, 2007: 56). In the case of Latvia – it was a Western province of the USSR during Soviet times, at present – it is a distant part of the European Union.

In time of social changes and during the process of globalisation (and in some sense – also glocalization) from which proceeds the threat of social alienation, people show a growing interest in their own local and regional history. The preservation of language is hence a powerful weapon against social-cultural equalisation and globalisation (see Boerrigter 2007, 57).

[1] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=221396
[2] http://www.ur.gov.lv/pakalpojumi.html

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The company name, according to van Riel (1996), is determined by communication policy. A name is part of the language system. If a company chooses a name in a certain language it will address the group of people who speak the same language (Boerrigter, 2007: 58) or it stresses the exoticism in a certain society. There is also an economic factor that plays a role in the choice for a certain language, because a business name is also part of a business marketing strategy (Boerrigter, 2007: 59–60). According to Paula Sjőblom (2011), the functions of names are focal in an economic environment, and the semantic features have a remarkable synchronic importance, too.

1. *Latvia* and *Riga* as pragmatonyms in the Soviet period (1940/41; 1944–1990)

The use of the name of the country Latvia (*Latvija*), as well as the name of the capital Riga (*Rīga*) in Soviet times were widespread for all kinds of products, for example: micro-bus *Latvija*, radio *Latvija*, soap *Latvija*, coffee *Latvija*; cake *Rīga*, moped *Rīga* 7, washing machine *Rīga*, piano *Rīga*, piece of furniture *Rīga*, *Latvija*, etc. (See Picture No. 1.) For a short period there was also a train named *Latvija*.



Picture No. 1.

At that time for the publicity of a small country it was important to have identification and upstage on such a large territory as the Soviet Union which was almost the only market for domestic production. It was like a province identity (see Boerrigter, 2007: 54) which was stressed by a product name. Mostly these products were made in Latvia, but nowadays they all have disappeared from the "industry stage".

2. *Latvia* and *Riga* as pragmatonyms – period of Independence (since 1990)

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After 1990, in the years of independence, the usage of the name of the country in the names of commercial products and especially in the names of companies was restricted by instruction (Resolution No. 462, § 2.4 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 04.11.1992) on purpose to protect oneself against belittling of the patriotic notion. Nevertheless there are such names in use – which are connected with luxury products, for instance: box of sweets *Latvija*, *Rīga*, chocolate *Rīga*, cheese *Latvija*, etc. (See Pictures No. 2, 3, 4.). One of the most favourite names in commercial products is *Vecrīga* (‘Old Riga’): name of the cake *Vecrīga*, name of liqueur *Vecrīga*, etc. All these products are known with positive connotations. They are also meant to be enticing pieces of souvenirs.



Picture No. 2. Chocolate *Rīga* is especially popular among tourists.



Picture No. 3.

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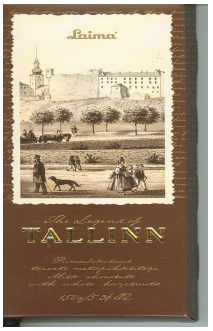
Picture No. 4.

A new collection of exclusive hand-made chocolates named *Rīga* has been created by the company *Pure chocolate*.

It would be interesting to compare the usage of analogical names for commercial products and companies (*Lietuva*, *Vilnius*; *Eesti*, *Tallinn*) in other neighbouring Baltic countries – Lithuania, Estonia – as well. Even the largest producer of confectionery in Latvia – factory *Laima* – has developed a special chain of products named after the capitals of neighbouring countries: cf. boxes of sweets *Vilnius* and *Tallinn*, as well as *Lietuva*, and *Eesti*.



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Picture No. 5.

3. Company names including the name *Latvija*

For companies, as it was already mentioned, it is important not only to identify, but also to provide the information about the location, to separate from other similar companies (cf. Sjőblom 2005, 271; Boerrigter 2007, 53).

Nowadays 1737 companies include the name of *Latvija* into company names (Latvian form *Latvija* – 675, international form *Latvia* – 1062). Even the surname of one of the directors of such companies is *Latvietis* 'Latvian' (Diena 18.11.2011).

Very few of companies use the Nominative case of the name of the country – it is only as an exception (companies founded before the regulations of the Council of Ministers have been accepted), or example:

- Viesnīca LATVIJA (hotel) (Picture No. 6.)



Picture No. 6.

More often there are names with some attributive position before the name of the country:

- ATVĒRTĀ LATVIJA ('Open Latvia'),
- VIZUĀLĀ LATVIJA ('Visual Latvia'),
- AGRO LATVIJA ('Agricultural Latvia'),

or *Latvija/Latvia* is added after an international company name:

- EGMONT LATVIJA,
- EKOPIPE LATVIJA
- ORIFLAME LATVIJA,
- LEMMINKAINEN LATVIJA,

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❖ TREILER LATVIJA.

Sometimes the Locative case (*Latvijā*) is used in the name of the company – as the last component of the name:

❖ INTERINFO LATVIJĀ (‘Interinfo in Latvia’),
❖ DARINĀTS LATVIJĀ (‘Made in Latvia’).

The most spread paradigm is company names including the Genitive case of the country name (*Latvijas*) which has mainly the possessive meaning, for instance:

❖ LATVIJAS PIENS (‘Milk of Latvia’),
❖ LATVIJAS MAIZNIEKS (‘Baker of Latvia’) (Picture No.7.),

❖ LATVIJAS BEKONS (‘Bacon of Latvia’),
❖ LATVIJAS VĒSTNESIS (‘Messenger of Latvia’, newspaper),
❖ LATVIJAS ĶĪMIJAS ŽURNĀLS (‘Magazine of Chemistry of Latvia’).

4. Company names including the name *Rīga*

1090 companies and institutions include the name *Rīga* (in the Nominative or Genitive case). It can be used as the first component or the second component of the name, for example:

❖ brass band RĪGA,
❖ former football club FK RĪGA,
❖ basketball team RĪGA,

Basketball team TTT RĪGA (Picture No. 8.),
RĪGA Hotel (Picture No. 9.)



❖ RĪGA SOLO (the name of Hunter Club),

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RĪGA FOOD (Picture No. 10.)

- ❖ AGRO RĪGA,
- ❖ MACRO RĪGA,
- ❖ MEGO RĪGA.

More often the Genitive case of the city name is used in the names of the companies, for instance:

- ❖ RĪGAS AVĪZE (‘Newspaper of Riga’),
- ❖ RĪGAS SANTĪMS (‘Santim of Riga’, newspaper),
- ❖ RĪGAS LAIKS (‘Time of Riga’, magazine),
- ❖ RĪGAS VIĻŅI (‘Waves of Riga’, magazine),
- ❖ RĪGAS MELNAIS BALZAMS (‘Black Balsam of Riga’),
- ❖ RĪGAS KVASS (‘Bread Kvass of Riga’).

In time of social changes and during the process of globalisation, companies show a growing interest in their local and regional identity. Particularly names of the country *Latvija* and the capital *Rīga* have positive connotations in the eyes of the customers.

II. Creative Names of Latvian Shops, Restaurants, and Entertainment Businesses

The importance of the names of shops, bars, restaurants, etc., as the main constituents of urban linguistic landscape reaches far beyond the commercial functionality, although eventual commercial success has probably been the main goal of the name-givers. The afore-mentioned names are forming the urban linguistic environment, and thousands and thousands of people are reading these names as some kind of literature, even without any intention to use the offered services. Some people want to find humour in the language landscape and are mostly interested in funny names. There are even special websites containing funny onomastic material. As to the names of companies, a research of Angelika Bergien shows that approx. 35% of consumer informants of the younger group (aged between 20 and 30 years) think that creativity (e.g., humour, clever wordplay) is an important element in company names. (Strangely enough, consumers of the older group – aged between 40 and 50 – do not think creativity is important) (Bergien 2007, 267–268); probably some other research would nevertheless show approval for creative company names (and shop names) in older consumers, too.

Before discussing creative names, we must at first define the main characteristics of the opposite – i.e. of the non-creative or, more precisely, ordinary and usual names. Thus, an **ordinary** Latvian name (and not only Latvian; the same characteristics might apply to the situation in other languages, too) for a shop,

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restaurant, etc. is a grammatically correct and stylistically unmarked nominal designation (based on a substantive or group of substantives) which

1) describes directly the main function of the respective business: e.g. *Aptieka* 'Drugstore', *Grāmatnīca* 'Book shop', *Gaļas veikals* 'Butcher's';

2) indicates the function by using a word partly connected with the business: e.g., *Avokado* 'Avocado' (a condiment shop), *Saulespuķe* 'Sunflower' (a florist's shop; there is a lot of florist's named after some particular flower), *Latvijas Balzāms* 'Latvian Balsam' (chain of shops for alcoholic drinks; "*Latvijas Balzāms*" is one of the most well-known of Latvian-produced alcoholic beverages);

3) indicates the function indirectly by using a word or nominal phrase metaphorically connected with the function of this business: e.g., *Gaisma* 'Light' (a shop of electric appliances);

4) is based on a proper name:

a personal name – either a first name: e.g., *Olga* and *Rita* (shops of fashion clothes) or, as might be more typical elsewhere in the world, too, the surname of the shop's owner: e.g., *Gerkens un Ko* (a chain of cheap-end shops founded by a Latvian businessman, Raimonds Gerkens);

a place name: e.g., *Daugava* (*Daugava* – a river in Latvia; a chain of shops for dairy products and bread);

a zoonym: e.g. *Reksis* (*Reksis* – a typical Latvian dog's name; name of a shop of products for pets);

5) uses a noun with positive connotation pertaining to nature, beauty etc.: e.g., *Dzintars* 'Amber' (name of a famous perfumery factory and chain of shops in Latvia), as an example from the Russian language and from the Soviet past one could mention the chain of shops *Berjozka* 'Small birch-tree' (birch-tree being associated with femininity and beauty in Russian folklore);

6) uses abbreviations or pseudo-words: e.g., *Anre*, *Mego*, *Elvi*;

7) uses a traditional construction with the prefix *pie* 'at' and a proper name or, less frequently, designation of a place: e.g., the shops *Pie Valentīnas* 'At Valentina's', *Pie Kalniņa* 'At Mr. Kalniņš', *Pie tilta* 'At the bridge' (however, the names belonging to this group have a slightly archaic stylistic connotation, and thus are not fully neutral).

There are two main structural groups of Latvian *creative names* for shops and other similar businesses: 1) nominal designations and 2) predicative phrases.

As names for the shops are mostly nominal designations, a *nominal name* must have some formal or semantic particularity in order to be creative. The name-giver must come up with, e.g.:

1) a name which is in no way connected with the respective business: e.g., the names of coffee-houses *Dēli* 'Sons', *80 vēstules* '80 letters', *Degviela* 'Fuel' (to tell the truth, the last has at least some metaphorical connection with the main function of a coffee-house); the shop names *Ods* 'Gnat', *Pauze* 'Pause', *Ganības* 'Pasture-ground', *Pietura* 'Stop', *Kuģis* 'Ship', *Vidus* 'Middle' (sometimes, presumably, there has been a logical connection between the name and the business, but this connection is familiar only to the name-giver and remains obscure to the customers); *Absinte* (instead of correct Latvian *absints* 'absinthe') as the name for a clothes shop;

2) a diminutive name (which in Latvian is formed by using regular suffixes (*-iņš*, *-iņa*, *-ītis*, *-īte*) where it would not be expected: e.g., *Tītariņš* (a diminutive from

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tītars ‘turkey’ as a name for a meat shop), *Cukuriņš* (a diminutive from *cukurs* ‘sugar’), *Trepītes* (a diminutive from *trepes* ‘stairs’), *Debestiņa* (a rarely used diminutive from *debess* ‘sky’), and *Dzīvīte* (diminutive from *dzīve* ‘life’ as a name of groceries); sometimes the diminutive is derived from a place name, e.g., shop names *Daugaviņa* (from the name of the biggest Latvian river *Daugava*), *Iecaviņa* (from the name of the river and the town *Iecava*), *Aizkrauklīte* (from the name of the town *Aizkraukle*);

3) a name with some derivative peculiarity, e.g., *Kūkotava* (the name of a coffee-house in Riga, a derivate from a non-existing verb **kūkot* ‘to eat cakes’ [< *kūka* ‘cake’], a humorous effect is successfully created due to the two homonyms *kūkot* ‘1. to cuckoo; 2. to drowse’);

4) an especially expressive name: e.g., names of shops *Pēdējā cerība* ‘The Last Hope’ and *Vienīgā iespēja* ‘The Only Chance’;

5) a name containing a non-standard word. Most often, they are old non-standard loanwords from German (now considered colloquial or archaic): e.g., *Bode* ‘Shop’, *Labā bode* ‘The Good Shop’, *Ķēķis* ‘Kitchen’, *Omīte* ‘Granny’, *Grāpis* ‘Kettle’, etc.;

6) a name containing a nominal word (usually a noun) in an indirect case rather than the typical nominative: e. g., a shop name *Sirsniņai* literally ‘For the (little) Heart’ (a translation ‘For the Sweetheart’ would be more precise); a coffee-house name *Mierā* ‘In Peace’; a name of a fish restaurant *Murdā* ‘In a Fish-catching Basket’; a florist’s shop *Lakstos* (‘In the [flower] stalks, in the greenery’);

7) a deliberately misspelt name: e.g., *Crabis* instead of correct Latvian *krabis* ‘Crab’ (a shop of fishing equipment): one wrong letter is enough to attract customers’ attention more effectively;

8) a name created from semantically unusual collocations: e.g., the restaurants *Lidojošā varde* ‘Flying Frog’ and *Jautrais ods* ‘Merry Gnat’ (a famous restaurant with an identical name existed in Latvia already before the WWII; possibly there is an – associative connection with the Latvian idiom *jautrā prātā* ‘drunk [literally ‘in a merry mind’);

9) a name consisting of an isolated adjective: e.g., a restaurant name *Sarkans* ‘Red’ (it is to be noted that adjectives in Latvian can take a definite or indefinite form, and *sarkans* is indefinite, although a definite form *sarkanais* would be more “normal” for a name);

10) a name consisting of adverbs (thus formally non-nominal words) or pronouns: e.g., names of shops and restaurants *Kur* ‘Where’, *Šeit* ‘Here’, *Parīt* ‘The Day After Tomorrow’, *Tev un man* ‘For You and Me’;

11) a name consisting of numerals: e.g., names of shops *Septiņi* ‘Seven’, *Trīspadsmit* ‘Thirteen’, *1739, ½* (not to mention the less creative numeral names based on the street address of the respective business);

12) a name alluding to a precedent text, e.g., shop names *Trīs sivēni* ‘Three Piglets’ (allusion to the popular fairy-tale), *Pieci vilki* ‘Five Wolves’ (allusion to a Latvian folksong), and *Mumins* ‘Moomin’ (allusion to the character in the Finnish writer Tove Jansson’s books), a name of a club *Četri balti krekli* ‘Four White Shirts’ (allusion to a poem by the Latvian poet Māris Čaklais);

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13) a name with inverse message, e.g., a name for a second-hand shop *Nekas īpašs* ‘Nothing Special’ (this name might also be an allusion to a notorious interview of a Latvian politician where the respective English phrase was used);

14) play of words (or letters), e.g., a club name *KGB*, which is decoded “harmlessly” as *Klubs Golden Bonus* (rather than the Russian abbreviation for the notorious Soviet-time state security committee);

15) a hyper-ordinary non-informative name (*Veikals* ‘Shop’, *Tirgotava* ‘Shop/Store’) which sometimes, paradoxically, may be perceived as quite creative when given to a shop in a city or town where one can find hundreds of other shops with very different names.

Predicative phrases are rarely used as names of any kind in Indo-European languages (although there are exceptions, e.g., Ukrainian surnames of the type *Moliboga* ‘say your prayer’). Thus the names consisting of such phrases almost always seem to be unusual and creative:

1) There are some names consisting exclusively of verbs: e.g., names of restaurants *Pasēdēt* ‘To Sit For a While’ (it is unusual to have an infinitive form in a name), or *Nāc un ēd*! ‘Come and Eat!’.

2) Sentence-like predicative phrases are quite rare and thus really extraordinary and creative, especially if the semantic content of the phrase has some specific negative connotations (“inverse message”), as in *Sēdies, divi*! ‘Sit Down, (you’ve got) a Two!’ (2 = once the lowest mark in Latvian schools and universities) – the name of a coffee-house situated close to the then Faculty of Philology. This coffee-house did not have a long life, although a positively-connotated name *Es mīlu Tevi* ‘I Love You’ did not prove to be more successful either – this coffee-house also exists no more. (A coffee-house in Old Riga with the equivalent English name *I Love You* is still functioning; nevertheless, its success might not necessarily mean that an English name attracts more costumers. The coffee-house with the mentioned English name simply has a commercially better location).

3) Greetings as minimal phrases with reduced predicativity are also used as names: e.g., names of restaurants *Čau, Rasma*! ‘Ciao, Rasma [a female personal name]’ and *Sveiks, Šveik!* ‘Hello, Švejk! [the good soldier Švejk from the novel by the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek; the alliteration is created deliberately].

4) Predicative phrases used as names for restaurants are sometimes originated from precedent texts: e.g., *Pulkvedim neviens neraksta* ‘No One Writes to the Colonel’ (title of a story by the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez), *Pūt, vējiņi*! ‘Blow, Wind! (Title of Latvian folksong and also a title of a play by the Latvian poet Rainis; the name of this restaurant is one of the oldest of its kind, dating back to the 1960s), *Ar mani atkal runā kaijas* ‘Seagulls Speak to Me Again’ (a title of a Latvian song), *Pastnieks zvana divreiz* ‘Postman Rings Twice’ (the American novel and film “The postman always rings twice”).

Creative names of shops, restaurants, clubs etc. make the linguistic environment in cities and towns more attractive and interesting. These names deserve more attention from at least three points of view – i.e., from the point of view of onomastics, economics, and ethnolinguistics. All names of shops, especially the creative ones, broaden the field of onomastic research, offering a manifold material which can be (as to the variety of form) compared only to the multiformity of artionyms. From the point of view of economics, the commercial effectiveness of creative names must be

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verified. Although it may seem *a priori* that a creative name should be commercially more successful than an ordinary, less creative name, a lot of businesses having creative names have gone bankrupt (of course, in most cases it has not been because of the name). The third point of view, that of – ethnolinguistics, implies the evaluation of the use, perception and effectiveness of creative names in different countries. Some preliminary observations show that, e.g., there are fewer creative shop names in Finland than in Latvia; if the observation made by the authors of this paper is true, the reasons should be analysed. Possibly the connotations of creative shop names have less importance for Finnish consumers. The Ukrainian onomastician Irina Malevych in her research of precedential names arrives to the following conclusion: "Having compared the peculiarities of the usage of Ukrainian and Finnish precedential phenomena, we found that connotative usage prevails in Ukrainian outdoor advertising and denotative in Finnish. This fact demonstrates on which mental peculiarities of Ukrainian and Finnish consumers advertising is oriented" (Malevych 2012). Latvian consumers seem to be – like the Ukrainian ones – more connotation-oriented.

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