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# Immigrants' business naming: Persian restaurants and supermarkets in Vienna's linguistic landscape

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**Immigrants' business naming: Persian restaurants and supermarkets in Vienna's linguistic landscape**

**Abstract:** A good commercial name must be able to attract customers' attention and ultimately promote the development of the business. Further, commercial names may reveal the concepts that are appealing to name-givers. This study examines the names of restaurants, cafes and supermarkets belonging to Iranian migrants in Vienna to find out which concepts are selected by the name-givers of these businesses to coin appealing names and, subsequently, to attract customers. The data was collected through conducting online searches, reviewing local magazines, visiting business entities and photographing shop signs. The semantic analysis of the names demonstrates that Persian names denoting the geography of Iran or Persian literature, history and mythology, as well as Persian personal names, are most prevalent. The

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results also indicate that immigrants take a pragmatic approach in selecting language(s) for naming their business. In other words, language selection is essentially product-oriented and used to convey authenticity.

**Keywords:** Shop names, business names, restaurant and supermarket names, linguistic landscape, migration.

**Dénomination commerciale des immigrants : Restaurants et supermarchés persans dans le paysage linguistique de Vienne**

**Résumé :** Un bon nom commercial doit être capable d'attirer l'attention des clients et finalement de favoriser le développement de l'entreprise. De plus, les noms commerciaux peuvent révéler les concepts qui plaisent aux donneurs de noms. Cette étude examine les noms des restaurants, cafés et supermarchés appartenant aux migrants iraniens à Vienne pour découvrir quels concepts sont choisis par les donneurs de noms de ces entreprises pour inventer des noms attrayants et, par la suite, pour attirer des clients. Les données ont été recueillies en effectuant des recherches en ligne, en examinant les magazines locaux, en visitant des entités commerciales et en photographiant les enseignes des magasins. L'analyse sémantique des noms démontre que les noms persans dénotant la géographie de l'Iran ou la littérature, l'histoire et la mythologie perses, ainsi que les noms personnels persans, sont les plus répandus. Les résultats indiquent également que les immigrants adoptent une approche pragmatique dans le choix de la ou des langues pour nommer leur entreprise. En d'autres termes, la sélection de la langue est essentiellement axée sur le produit et utilisée pour transmettre l'authenticité.

**Mots-clés :** Noms de magasins, noms commerciaux, noms de restaurants et de supermarchés, paysage linguistique, migration.

**Unternehmensbezeichnung Durch Einwanderer: Persische Restaurants und Supermärkte in der Wiener Sprachlandschaft**

**Zusammenfassung:** Ein guter Handelsname muss in der Lage sein, die Aufmerksamkeit der Kunden zu erregen und letztendlich die Entwicklung des Geschäfts zu fördern. Darüber hinaus können Handelsnamen die Konzepte enthüllen, die Namensgeber ansprechen. Diese Studie untersucht die Namen von Restaurants, Cafés und Supermärkten iranischer Migranten in Wien, um herauszufinden, welche Konzepte von den Namensgebern dieser Unternehmen ausgewählt werden, um ansprechende Namen zu prägen und in der Folge Kunden anzulocken. Die Daten wurden durch Online-Recherchen, Suchen in lokalen Magazinen, Besuch von Geschäftseinheiten und Fotografieren von Ladenschildern gesammelt. Die semantische Analyse der Namen zeigt, dass persische Namen, die auf Geographie des Iran oder die persische Literatur, Geschichte und Mythologie hinweisen, sowie persische Vornamen am weitesten verbreitet sind. Die Ergebnisse zeigen auch, dass Einwanderer bei der Auswahl der Sprache(n) für die Benennung ihres Unternehmens einen pragmatischen Ansatz verfolgen. Mit anderen Worten, die Sprachauswahl ist im Wesentlichen produktorientiert und dient der Vermittlung von Authentizität.

**Schlüsselbegriffe:** Geschäftsnamen, Handelsname, Restaurant- und Supermarktnamen, Sprachlandschaft, Migration.

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# Immigrants' business naming: Persian restaurants and supermarkets in Vienna's linguistic landscape

FATEMEH AKBARI

## 1. Introduction

Taking a short walk in an unknown city, one can obtain some information about the different ethnic, cultural, linguistic and social groups resident there, as well as their social, cultural and commercial activities. In the gathering of this information, languages, scripts and linguistic items play important roles. Linguistic items, such as names that are used to identify streets, buildings, organisations, shops and restaurants, form part of cities' linguistic landscapes. Linguistic landscape refers to "specific language objects that mark the public space" (Shohamy 2006: 112), or in Gorter's (2006: 2) words, "the use of language in its written form in the public sphere". Landry & Bourhis (1997: 25) state that "[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government building combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration". Linguistic landscape also illustrates the current interactions of a city. As Landry & Bourhis (1997: 26) point out, not only formal and governmental institutions but also the private sector and individuals are effective in its formation. However, depending on the level of power and position of individuals or institutions, the magnitude of their respective influence on linguistic landscape differs in different parts of the world. The research into signage in public spaces (commercial, non-commercial, and official signs) forms the core of linguistic landscape studies (Gorter 2014: 1). It is clear that commercial names make a significant contribution to the linguistic landscape of cities, having become in Sjöblom's (2013a: 161) opinion, among others, an integral part of urban public spaces.

This article presents the results of a synchronic and applied study of the names of restaurants, cafes and supermarkets of Iranian migrants to Vienna. In particular, it addresses the following questions: 1) which semantic components are used in Persian names to sound appealing? and 2) which language(s) is/are applied in naming? The aim of this research is to understand which concepts are considered desirable and selected by Iranian migrants in naming their business entities in a multilingual and multicultural context. The results of this study shed light on the aspects of Iranian migrants' identity that they wish to

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promote in the linguistic landscape of their host country. In addition, the results further reveal the correlation between language selection and the products offered by the commercial entities.

This paper begins by reviewing the theoretical premises of commercial names and commercial place names from an onomastic point of view set out in the relevant literature. It also provides a brief statistical introduction to Iranian migrants in Vienna. Following, the methodology, data analysis and discussion relating to the present research are provided. Finally, the conclusions of this study are presented.

## 2. Literature review

Business owners have long been aware that a good commercial name is not just a beautiful name; rather the name must be able to attract customers' attention and ultimately lead to the financial success of the business. As Sjöblom (2014: 93) states, a commercial name is essentially used for economic purposes and its function is to attract customers and investors and to direct their choices. That is why some famous companies employ marketing experts and linguists to make sure the names that designate their products are appropriate in all respects and have no explicit or implicit links with any undesirable concept. Nokia's marketers, for example, suggested Lumia for one of the company's products, because the name seemed attractive and rhymed with Nokia. Once the name was identified, it was given to linguists to assess its acceptability in 84 different languages (Volpe 2011).

Sjöblom (2014: 92) asserts that commercial names have mostly synchronic importance and complex structures. She categorises commercial names into four major groups, which may overlap. The first group includes *company/business names*. The second group is composed of *trademarks*, which refer to the name of certain products from a particular manufacturer. Trademarks can be in the format of a text, design or pattern, a form of packaging (the specific shape of a bottle of Coca-Cola) or even a sound. Trademarks are sometimes more than a mere linguistic element; a trademark is a phenomenon outside the world of linguistics and is mainly addressed in marketing and legal issues. *Product name* is also a form of commercial name that refers to a product, either produced or invented for commercial use (such as goods, services and ceremonies). The latter group consists of *brands* that may sometimes overlap with company names or trademarks. Brand owners, in many cases, offer a variety of products to the market. Sjöblom (2014: 94) adds that the monetary value of some brands, such as Google and Disney, is much higher than the total monetary value of their factories and employees.

The distinction between company and business names is not always clear. Sjöblom (2016: 454) defines *company* as "a financial unit whose

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purpose is to purchase inputs, merge them in the production process and sell acquired assets for acquisition of income". She argues that all businesses are not companies (e.g. private traders) nor can all companies in the strictest sense of the word be categorised under the heading of businesses that practice economic activity (e.g. housing cooperatives). Moreover, they can potentially be studied as both urban place names and commercial names. As Sokolova (2017: 1060) writes, such names can be examined not only from a phonetic, phonological, lexical, semantic, structural grammatical or onomastic perspective, but their examination from a legal perspective is also important. Accordingly and for the reason that restaurants and supermarkets are not legally considered as companies in all countries, the names of restaurants and supermarkets in the present study are categorised as business names.

The study of the relationship between the application of various types of names (personal names, hodonyms, hydronyms, toponyms etc.) as commercial names and the field of business activity or type of products and/or services offered may also reveal variation in naming trends between different commercial sectors. For instance, Jørgensen (2005: 202–203) examined the names of restaurants (along with bakers, pet-shops, hairdressers and laundries) under their headings in the yellow pages of the Copenhagen telephone directory for the year 2000. His data shows that personal names were not popular in restaurant names: only two out of 1141 restaurants reflected their owners' names while 23 per cent of hair and beauty salons were named after their owners. The number of personal names for bakeries, laundries and pet-shops were nineteen, one and zero respectively.

Commercial place names, including restaurants' names, are mirrors of the economic, social, political, cultural, and linguistic realities of their community. This constitutes the central focus of socio-onomastics, what Spolsky (2008: 4) calls "the close intertwining of linguistic and social facts". In other words, commercial names reflect the realities of their societies, and hence, may be changed for a variety of reasons, including social or political reasons. For example, Stoichițoiu Ichim (2013: 94) recounts that a restaurant in Bucharest originally called *Perla* ('pearl') was renamed *Warsaw* during communist rule in Romania, and that after the People's Revolution against Nicolae Ceaușescu – the communist dictator of that country – in 1989, it continued its activity under the name of *Balcic*, the name of a Romanian city that became part of Bulgaria after the Second World War. Stoichițoiu Ichim (2013: 96–97) examines the semantic components of Bucharest restaurants and groups them into three main categories. The first category refers to the nationality of the cuisine using the name of the restaurant owner or a special familiar dish. The second uses the implicit or associative concepts of the names belonging to Romanian cultural and historical heritage, and the third category seeks to attract customers' attention through some sort of amusing or unexpected name.

In addition, a commercial name not only defines the identity of a

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business entity and distinguishes it from others, but also aims to create an image in people's minds (Bergien 2007: 268; Sjöblom 2013a: 169). Sjöblom (2013b: 2) emphasises the need to "produc[e] a good image" and specifies this need as one of the two most important features of commercial names, alongside demonstrating identity. In this regard, the role of the concept and the implicit meaning that names carry are of particular significance. Name-givers and business owners are often aware of the important role of the implicit meanings of names and the positive or negative interpretation of them by society. Hence, they generally select names that create a positive image and are appealing in favour of names that may distort or question public sentiment. Name-givers and business owners also prefer to choose names that suit the values of their respective communities. In this way, onomastics can assist scholars to discover the beliefs and values of societies.

In a study titled *Linguistic patterns in the naming of the business centers of Tabriz*, Famian & Kolahdouz-Mohammadi (2016) investigated the issue of language selection in naming business entities in an Iranian city in which the majority of the population are native speakers of Azeri Turkish. Their investigation shows that although most Tabriz residents use Azeri Turkish for everyday conversations, the majority of restaurants and supermarkets have Persian (the official language of Iran) names for commercial reasons (Famian & Kolahdouz-Mohammadi 2016: 122–123). Similarly, Berezkina (2016) conducted a study on business and place names in the multicultural setting of Oslo, the capital of Norway, and concluded that the broad use of English is mainly connected to concepts such as international commerce, globalisation and up-to-dateness (Berezkina 2016: 125).

The role of demographic structure in naming and the language selection of restaurant names is also investigated by Makhiyanova & Remchukova (2016) in their research into restaurants' names in three major cities of Russia: Kazan, St. Petersburg and Moscow. In contrast to the above-mentioned studies by Famian & Kolahdouz-Mohammadi (2016) in Tabriz and Berezkina (2016) in Oslo, Makhiyanova & Remchukova (2016) show that restaurants' name-givers approaches vary according to the demographic structure of each city. In Kazan, where the inhabitants are mostly native speakers of Russian and/or Tatar, restaurants' name-givers mainly use the indigenous Tatar language. The name-givers of restaurants in St. Petersburg, which generally host well-educated guests who are expected to be able to understand the implicit meanings of names, use strategies like playing with words to create amusing names. In naming Moscow's restaurants, which are widely visited by tourists, a variety of name formation methods are applied to attract various types of tourists. The reasons behind the different approaches to name selection described in the Kazan, St. Petersburg and Moscow as opposed to the Tabriz- and Oslo-based studies might be investigated in separate research considering the socio-economic contexts of these cities.

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The literature review reveals a gap in the analysis of the interaction between immigrants and host countries in business naming practices, especially studies that investigate shared elements of migrants' and host country identities. These matters comprise new and emerging areas of linguistic research, and scholarly investigations remain in the initial stages of development and publication. This study makes a contribution to the gap in the current onomastics literature by examining the business names coined by immigrants in a multicultural setting. It addresses the elements of collective Iranian identity that the Iranian migrants in Vienna have promoted in the Viennese linguistic landscape, through the examination of the semantic contents of business entities' names. Further, the results of this research demonstrate how the cultural elements of a nation, such as language and cuisine, are tied together and how name-givers use language in order to highlight the authenticity of the foods they offer. It should be noted that this study focuses solely on the analysis of names, and that the scripts, text vector, and multimodal aspects of the shop signs and other aspects of name considerations are excluded from the present analysis. These aspects, in particular shop signs and their features, will be investigated in a separate study.

## 3. Iranian migrants in Vienna

Vienna is the capital and the cultural, economic and political heart of Austria. Due to its diverse demographic and cultural context, and its hosting of numerous international institutions as well as annual conferences, Vienna is known as a multilingual and multicultural city. According to official data released by the Austrian government, the population of Vienna is currently about 1.9 million.[1] About 50 per cent of the Viennese have a history of immigration; either they themselves or at least one of their parents was born in a country other than Austria and about 30 per cent are non-Austrian citizens. More than a third of immigrants settle in Vienna, and most of them are from other European countries. Nationals of Serbia, Germany and Turkey comprise the largest groups of Austrian immigrants, and most of them settle in Vienna.[2]

The Austrian state language is German and 98 per cent of the country's population speaks this language.[3] At the same time, according to the Austrian Constitution, the linguistic and cultural diversity of the ethnic groups living in the country is respected and protected. English is the second most commonly spoken language of this country, and many residents of the country have a good command of it. The Education First (EF) English

1 https://www.wien.gv.at (Accessed 2020-01-14).
2 https://www.wien.gv.at/statistik/pdf/viennainfigures-2019.pdf (Accessed 2020-01-14).
3 https://www.austria.info/uk/service-facts/about-austria/government-people (Accessed 2020-01-14).

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Proficiency Index (EPI) placed Austria in 8th place out of 100 countries in 2019, that is, Austria is among the countries with very high English proficiency.[4] While English is widely taught at school level, the teaching of other languages, including Persian, is conducted in more limited settings. Persian language classes are offered by the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Language Centre of the University of Vienna and some private institutes, such as Österreichische Orient-Gesellschaft Hammer-Purgstall ('The Austrian Orient Society Hammer-Purgstall'). In Austria, there is no official language policy for commercial (place) names; that is, business owners may coin or select any name in any language they wish, provided that the name is not in conflict with the rights of the owner of another business entity. For example, it is not permitted to register a trademark which has previously been registered. Similarly, the individual right of living celebrities to their own names is protected through the prohibition of the use of famous people's names without their official permission.

The presence of Persian speakers from different countries, including Iran and Afghanistan, has led to the emergence of the Persian language in Vienna's linguistic landscape, in particular on restaurant and supermarket signs. The population of Iranians living in Austria has been steadily rising in recent years. The number of Iranian immigrants increased at a rate of 145 percent from 2002 to 2018, reaching over 13,000 immigrants in 2018, more than 8,000 of whom live in Vienna.[5] Iranians living in Vienna are scattered in different parts of the city, and no particular neighbourhood of Vienna can be considered an "Iranian district". Taking a general view of the Iranians living in Austria, one may observe similarities between them and Iranian immigrants residing in the United States; for instance, they enjoy high levels of education and specialisation and a relatively high social and economic background. Many seek permanent residence in their host country to obtain a better social and economic situation (see Modarresi 2015: 157–163). One of the main reasons behind the significant emigration of Iranians over recent decades was the Islamic revolution in 1979 which led the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy (1921–1979) and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. These events resulted in enormous political, social, cultural and economic changes in Iran.

Despite the fact that the word *Iran* is well-known in Austria, Iranian restaurants are generally called *Persisches Restaurant* ('Persian restaurant'). *Persien* ('Persia') and *persisch* ('Persian') have a relatively long tradition of use in German and are associated with other concepts, such as the Persian Empire, Persian cats and Persian carpet. As such, the word *Persien* is related to a long-standing culture and civilisation that is respected and admired by the host community. Interestingly, the term *resturan-e irani* ('Iranian restaurant')

4 https://www.ef.co.uk/epi/# (Accessed 2020-01-14).
5 https://www.wien.gv.at (Accessed 2019-03-06).

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is the preferred term among Persian speakers and it seems unlikely that such speakers would use the term *resturan-e parsi* ('Persian restaurant') to describe this concept. It is noteworthy that both *Persia* and *Iran* refer to the same country. Reza Shah Pahlavi (1878–1944), the first Pahlavi king, changed the name of Persia to Iran (land of Aryans) at the same time that discourse alleging the superiority of Aryan blood was being promoted in Germany (for more information, see Nafisi 1934; Yarshater 1989).

## 4. Materials and methods

As Platen (1997: 39–44) mentions, the study of commercial names gives special attention to the specific components of names – designed to induce positive public sentiment – usually through an analysis of the phonic and/or semantic features of names. As such, since the generic components of names (such as *restaurant* and *cafe*) indicating the type of business entity do not differ significantly and are not relevant to addressing the research questions, they are also excluded from examination and the focus of this research is the specific components of the business names.

The data are composed of Persian and non-Persian names of restaurants, cafes and supermarkets offering Persian and/or non-Persian cuisine or eating/drinking products, and owned or managed by Iranian immigrants, in all 23 urban districts of Vienna. The data was collected through searching the internet, reviewing local Persian (-German) magazines (*Persia, Irani, Derafsh, Avvalin Ketab, Cando*), photographing entities' signs encountered in the city and visiting online directories and websites containing advertisements (*Yelp*, *Quandoo*, *Falter* and *TripAdvisor*) between March and December 2018. As this study focuses on Iranian immigrants' linguistic behaviour, the author sought to verify the Iranian background of business owners and managers by contacting or personally visiting the entities or relying on advertising claims such as "with Iranian management". "With Iranian management" is commonly used in Persian advertisements in order to emphasise the authenticity of cooking methods. Any data related to businesses managed by non-Iranian immigrants has been excluded from consideration. For example, data relating to the *Aseman* and *Noosh* restaurants, despite their Persian names, was deleted because these restaurants are owned by Afghan immigrants. Further, in the statistical processing methods employed, multiple branches of the same business entity are entered only once; for example, *Niki* supermarket, which has four branches in Vienna, is counted once. The *Niki* supermarkets comprise branches of one single entity and have been named by the same name giver(s). For the same reason, similar linguistic items that have non-identical activities (for instance, when a restaurant and a supermarket under the management of the same owner have identical names) are also included only once.

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In total, data on 47 Persian restaurants, cafes and supermarkets (called Persian entities from here on) were identified and collected. In the first phase of data analysis, the focus was on the language selection for naming. Following the completion of data collection, the names were categorised into two major groups differentiated on the basis of language: Persian versus non-Persian. There were 37 entities with Persian names and 10 with non-Persian ones. The Persian named entities comprised 22 restaurants/cafes and 15 supermarkets. Almost all the commercial entities with non-Persian names offer non-Persian cuisines and drinks. *Kardamom* ('cardamom') restaurant, which uses a German name but offers vegetarian Persian foods, was an exception. Italian and German names, such as *Treff* and *Ricco*, form the majority of Persian entities with non-Persian names.

In the second phase, the second category, composed of 37 Persian commercial names, was examined to identify their semantic references. Following semantic investigation of the names, six main groups, based on their semantic contents, were identified: 1) names that refer to the geography of Iran or particular land forms, 2) names of prominent figures of Iranian history, culture, literature or mythology, 3) Persian personal names used by ordinary people, 4) names that are reminiscent of nature, 5) names or features that refer to a pleasant atmosphere or food, and 6) eponyms of other famous business entities undertaking a similar activity (for example, one restaurant in Vienna is named *Neyeb* after a well-known restaurant chain in Tehran, the capital of Iran).

Subsequently, the links between the words chosen in the commercial names and their semantic references in speakers' minds were investigated. A questionnaire was designed in the form of a table containing the commercial entities' names (rows) and semantic content categories (columns). The questionnaire was sent to 15 potential participants selected from native Persian speakers who had lived in Tehran for at least 20 years, and were now residing either in Tehran or Vienna. The distribution of this table was undertaken in order to ensure that the semantic contents of the names were shared amongst Persian speakers and to reduce the impact of the author's personal perceptions and bias. Following an electronic invitation to participate, 12 native Persian speakers responded positively. They comprised 7 women and 5 men, were aged between 41 and 50 years old, and all held an undergraduate degree or higher educational qualification. Respondents were instructed to mark only one of the six semantic contents reflecting the strongest reference for each name. If they did not consider any of the six semantic contents appropriate, they were requested to list their own semantic content in the column of other semantic contents. The author then produced a table of commercial names' semantic contents to aggregate the results of the questionnaires. The table summarised the data based on a minimum of 4 marks for each field, that is, at least one-third of the respondents had marked a given semantic content for each particular name.

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## 5. Data analysis and discussion

In the below section, the data is analysed in order to answer the research questions: 1) which semantic components are used in Persian names to sound appealing? 2) which language(s) is/are applied in naming? It is obvious that the entire corpus of data must be considered in answering the latter question, while the first question is addressed with respect to Persian commercial names only.

### 5.1. Semantic components

Semantic analysis of Persian data showed that geographical names comprised 10 cases (27 per cent): *Apadana* (the audience hall in Persepolis), *Asia* (the largest continent on Earth subdivided into 48 countries, including Iran), *Pars* (Persia or Iran, in the Persian language), *Pasargad* (the capital of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great, 559–530 BC), *Khorasan* (a province of Iran divided into three provinces in 2004), *Sahand* (one of the highest mountains in the Iranian province of Azerbaijan), *Shiraz* (one of the most populous cities of Iran), *Tehran* (the capital of Iran), *Caspian* (the largest lake in the world bounded on the south by Iran) and *Neyran* (Niavaran, a district in the north of Tehran).

Nine names (24 per cent) were reminiscent of historical, literary, or mythical figures such as *Hatam* (the pre-Islamic Arab noble, renowned for his boundless generosity and graceful hospitality), *Hafez* (celebrated Persian lyric poet, ca. 715–792), *Shakhe-Nabat* (beloved of the poet Hafez), *Khayyam* (celebrated polymath and poet, 1048–1131), *Simorgh* (a benevolent, mythical bird in Iranian mythology and literature), *Shahrzad* (the storyteller in One Thousand and One Nights), *Kurosh* (a Persian name, the founder of the Achaemenid empire), *Nima* (a Persian name and a modern Persian poet) and *1001-Shab* (a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales).

The third group, ordinary personal names, comprised seven names (19 per cent): *Apame, Arvin, Aria, Ariana, Ava, Raman* and *Niki*. Four business names (11 per cent) were marked as names with semantic contents related to nature: *Adish* ('fire'), *Sahra* ('desert'), *Morvarid* ('pearl') and *Yas* ('a kind of flower'). Five of the restaurants and supermarkets' names (13 per cent) were referred to a pleasant atmosphere/food, including *Patogh* ('hangout'), *Saffron* ('saffron'), *Safa* ('pleasantness'), *Kolbe* ('bungalow') and *Kook* ('tune(d)'). Interestingly, *Saffron* was mainly marked in the column of pleasant atmosphere or food, rather than nature, even though it refers to a seasoning extracted from a flower. This may be because of the important role of saffron in Persian cuisine.

*Nayeb* was the only name (3 per cent) that was associated with the reputation of an Iranian chain restaurant and *Fadak* was an exceptional case marked in the column "Other". Ten out of the 12 respondents identified it as the name of a garden in the history of Islam and two associated it with a park

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in Tehran or confectionary item with the same name. Therefore, the column "Other", that includes the only case referring to Islamic concepts (3 per cent), was renamed "Islamic concepts".

Therefore, the semantic contents of the names of Iranian restaurants and supermarkets in Vienna, based on the responses of Persian speaking respondents in terms of frequency, are: 1) Iranian geography, 2) literary, historical or mythical figures, 3) personal names of ordinary people, 4) pleasant atmosphere or food, 5) nature, 6) the reputation of a similar business entity in Iran, and finally 7) Islamic concepts.

As Figure 1 shows, more than 70 percent of the names refer to Iran's geography, history, mythology and literary heritage, and Persian personal names for ordinary people. In regard to personal names in Iran, it should be noted that they can be classified into two main groups: non-Arabic versus Arabic names. Arabic names usually refer to Islamic concepts and figures; hence, they can be interpreted as signalling the respect of the name-givers' for religion, while the non-Arabic ones, in general, do not convey such attitudes. (For more information on personal names and naming in Iran, see the National Organisation for Civil Registration (www.sabteahval.ir); Imani 1984; Ahmadi et al. 2018; Zandi 2018.) This suggests that name-givers mostly use elements of the ancient civilisation of Iran and Persian literature to attract customers.

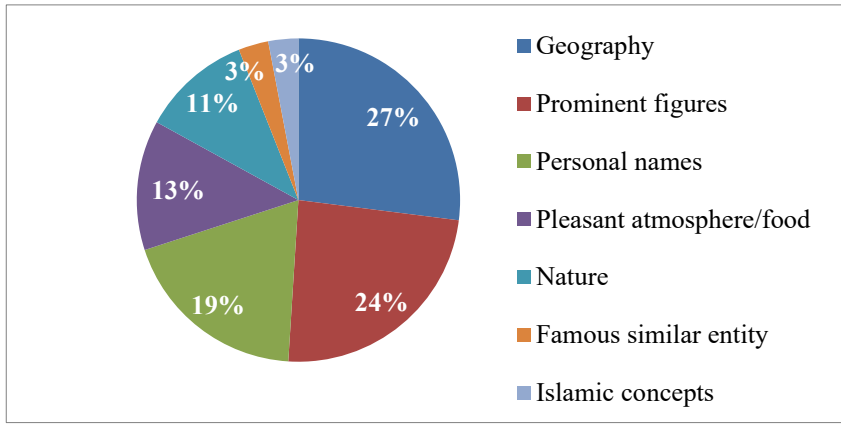



Figure 1: Commercial names' semantic contents

This finding is in accordance with a research conducted by Izadi & Parvaresh (2016) on the linguistic landscape of ethnic Persian shops in Sydney, Australia, which illustrates how the shop owners apply the Persian language and its semiotic resources to demonstrate their collective identity. Interestingly, this research alongside the present study illustrates the difference between Iranian and Chinese migrants: in a study of about 400 Chinese restaurant names in Los Angeles, Chen (2018) examined the issue of localisation and globalisation in commercial naming. She concluded that

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most of the business names chosen by Chinese immigrants use either local or family names to identify the type of restaurant or apply English names to emphasise the integration of the immigrants into the host community. Chen (2018: 3) also points out that some Chinese restaurants have changed their recipes or even invented new foods to assimilate with the taste preferences of American and European consumers. This approach is different from Persian restaurants in Vienna that emphasise the authenticity of their foods by selecting Persian names and, according to the author's observation, by following the traditional recipes of Iranian cuisine.

The data also show the application of global features to a number of names. Global features in commercial names, as it is defined by Sjöblom (2013b: 8), are "linguistic elements that promote the process of globalisation in one way or another and, at the same time, are spread all over the globe with the help of the political, economic and cultural globalisation process". In her opinion, names in languages like English and dead languages (Latin and Ancient Greek) that are comprehensible to at least most of the Western world, quasi-linguistic words formed with elements of English, Latin or some other known languages, internationalisms (words that appear in many languages) and allusions to internationally-known places and figures have global features. Accordingly, some of the names in my data that are globally known (like *Pars, Pasargad* and *Khayyam*) possess global features. Such names may be appealing because of their reputation and recognisability.

### 5.2. Language selection

Language selection is probably one of the first name variables that name-givers decide upon. Syrjälä (2017: 186–187) points out that the choice of language is also a factor indicating the identity of business owners. Languages on commercial entities' signs play a communicative role and at the same time a symbolic function (Malinowski 2009: 110). They also indicate relations of power and the position of speakers of the language(s) in a region (Shohamy 2006: 112). The present data corpus shows that about 80 per cent (37 out of 47) of the entities have Persian names and only 10 of the entity names are constructed from words in languages other than Persian: *Bio Paradies*, *Café Macchiato*, *Café Treff*, *Imbiss Domino*, *Jack Daniel's Burger*, *Kardamom*, *Lepenac Grill*, *Pizza Ricco*, *Pizza Prego* and *Reo Lounge*. German and Italian were applied in 6 out of 10 cases of foreign names. *Kardamom* is the only restaurant which offers Persian cuisine but possesses a non-Persian name. This finding may be attributed to the assumed link between the language the name-givers select and the cuisine the entities offer.

The informal conversations between the author and the entities' managers reveal several possible reasons for the selection of Persian to coin names for the business entities that offer Persian cuisine or products. For

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instance, some name-givers may have intended to emphasise the authenticity of their products through attributing the business entity to the Persian language, itself another part of the original culture that produced Persian cuisine. This strategy is common beyond the present case study. For instance, many restaurants offering Italian cuisine around the world select Italian names. The data collected in this study support this notion. The migrant name-givers' good command of Persian, as their mother tongue, might be another factor in the selection of Persian for naming. It guarantees their command of a rich vocabulary for the selection and construction of names, which they may not enjoy in their second language. The use of Persian also enhances name-giver's confidence about the connotations and denotations of the names they choose. Finally, Persian names seem exotic for non-Persian speakers and may potentially be attractive for those who are interested in trying cuisines from other cultures.

Although the distinction between supermarkets and restaurants/cafes is not a key binary in the present research, it is noticeable that all 15 supermarkets had Persian names. One likely reason is that their major clientele comprises Persian speakers who are familiar with Persian cooking. One of the supermarket managers believed that the non-Persian community is more likely to prefer professionally prepared Persian food at a restaurant rather than seeking out and buying unknown foodstuffs in order to try cooking a new cuisine at home. The naming of Persian supermarkets using Persian words may also support the observation of Popovec (2006, quoted in Izadi & Parvaresh 2016: 185) that first-generation immigrants prefer to use goods and services that are reminiscent of their home country.

Finally, another finding regarding language selection is the scarcity of Arabic/Islamic names in the data. Despite the relatively high frequency of borrowed Arabic words in the Persian language (approximately forty per cent – see Perry 2002) due to the long history of the establishment of Islam in Iran, the presence of Arabic and especially Islamic names in the data is almost negligible. The avoidance of Arabic loan words by Iranian business-owners may be a strategy designed to distinguish their businesses from other Middle Eastern restaurants. It may also be due to the interest of the name-givers in Persian words which are not of Arabic origin, as an important element of their identity, and their tendency to highlight their Iranian rather than Islamic identity. Notably, this finding does not comply with the official media in Iran which clearly advances the Islamic aspects of Iranians' identity. The Iranian official media unequivocally promote Islamic-Iranian (and not Iranian-Islamic) collective identity of the nation. On the other hand, there are some movements in the direction of nurturing a national identity that is not centred on Islamic beliefs. For instance, the phenomenon of the "Aryan marriage" is a rather recent trend among those seeking an alternative to Islamic marriage. Aryan marriage vows are read in Persian and officially forbidden while the Islamic marriage ceremony, recited in Arabic, is officially accepted. Individual citizens

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may express their national and/or Islamic identity to different extents, often in an overlapping manner. Creating a clear-cut distinction between these two aspects of Iranians' identity can be considered naive due to the presence of Islamic culture in Iran and almost all dimensions of Iranian life over the last 1400 years.

In short, it seems that there is a strong link between the types of cuisine or products offered by restaurants, cafes and supermarkets and the language selected for naming the business entity.

## 6. Conclusions

The two main aims of commercial names are to identify a business from others and to attract investors and customers. Good commercial names often make use of features such as linguistic creativity, authenticity, appealing concepts and sounds, as well as being triggers for positive emotions, able to be easily remembered and pronounced, and consonant with the field of the business activity and the taste of targeted consumer group. In other words, a good commercial name enjoys a number of linguistic and extra-linguistic features. Undoubtedly, business owners spend time coining names that are morphologically and semantically appealing. However, as Syrjälä (2017: 187) suggests, it is not easy to predict the linguistic interpretation of commercial names by the general public. This study investigated the language selection and semantic contents of the names of restaurants, supermarkets and cafes owned and/or managed by Iranian immigrants to Vienna to identify which aspects of Iranian identity were shared with the host country's linguistic landscape.

As Woldemariam & Lanza (2015: 175) argue, identity can be discovered and shaped in the linguistic context of public spaces. From their point of view, shop signs not only represent offered goods or services, but can also contain information about the true or imagined identity of the owners of businesses. The semantic analysis of the names demonstrates the popularity of commercial names that refer to Iran's geography, prominent figures of literature, history and mythology as well as Persian personal names among name-givers. This result reflects the collective identity elements that are promoted by Iranian immigrants: the land, the ancient civilisation and the language. This repertoire represents the most valuable symbols of identity that the Iranian immigrants in Vienna desire to present to their host country. Interestingly, this emphasis on the national identity of Iranians rather than the religious aspect of their identity is in contrast with the interpretation of Iranians' collective identity emphasised by the government of and official media in Iran.

Moreover, the results showed that the Persian language is applied for naming entities that exclusively offer Persian foods, drinks and products while non-Persian names are used for entities selling non-Persian cuisines.

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The application of one's home language when offering Persian cuisine and the use of languages other than Persian, like German and Italian, in the names of business entities that offer German and Italian cuisine respectively, may suggest the correlation between the origin of a cuisine and language selection aimed at creating an image of authenticity of food preparation and cooking culture. In this sense, language selection in commercial naming follows a pragmatic approach. In short, it may be concluded that language selection in commercial naming, like the application of semantic rules, is primarily determined in accordance with the need to maximise commercial benefit, and reflects a pragmatic approach towards business.

Lastly, it is hoped that the findings of this research may also encourage further discussion and analysis of the impact of immigration on names from a sociolinguistic perspective.

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