

Original Research

Company naming strategies in the Italian interior design industry

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Date of submission: 14.01.2020 | **Date of acceptance for publication:** 29.05.2020

Recommended citation format: Shevliakova, D. A. (2020). Company naming strategies in the Italian interior design industry. *Training, Language and Culture*, 4(2), 31-42. Doi: [10.22363/2521-442X-2020-4-2-31-42](https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2020-4-2-31-42)

The study focuses on naming etymology and semantics used by Italian interior design companies (manufacturers of furniture, light fixtures and accessories), represented in the Russian market. This involved examining the extent to which the names of Italian interior design companies corresponded to the established naming practices of companies, identifying the strategies used therein, as well as developing a classification of names based on etymological and semantic analysis. The most common naming strategies were grouped into four categories that appear the most productive: Proper Nouns (54.4% of all names studied), Words and Phrases in Everyday Use (26.6%), Abbreviations (13.1%), and Geographical Names (5.9%). The research outcome will be the identification of the most efficient way of naming companies in the interior design industry, as well as a linguocultural analysis of the most frequently used types of names. The analysis of the material offers the opportunity to speculate on the relevance of national identity to the process of design company naming.

KEYWORDS: naming, branding, marketing, interior design, Italian



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 21st century, the number of Italian companies manufacturing furniture, light fixtures, and other interior design objects has been estimated to exceed 36,000. The modern-day design industry is comprised of a wide range of enterprises: engineering companies, architectural firms, design studios, furniture and lighting stores as well as factories and craft workshops that produce interior design objects. Italy's interior design industry provides over 231,000 jobs, playing an important role in the state's economy (Lojacono, 2007, p. 11-29).

In 1979, Italy became the world's number one exporter of furniture and interior design objects, a status which it held till 2003. After that there followed a dip in export volume, with another surge starting in 2006. The main export category of the Italian interior design industry is furniture (78%), followed by light fixtures (13%), and other accessories (9%). Russia is one of Italy's main trade partners and was the fourth largest export market in 2015 for Italian interior design goods after Germany, France and the United States (ICE, 2020). In 2005, in response to requests from the traditional

participants in Milanese trade fairs, *Federlegno-Arredo* and *Cosmit* joined forces in order to present a group of Milanese fair products on several foreign markets, including Russia. This initiative, dubbed *iSaloni WorldWide*, led to highly successful trade fairs in New York and later in Moscow.

Another indicator of success is the growing number of visitors at the *iSaloni WorldWide* trade fair in Moscow, which includes many designers, architects, and furniture and interior design specialists. *Cosmit* puts the total number of visitors in 2005 at 13,199. By 2008, the number had more than doubled, with a total of 28,748 visitors. Such a positive dynamic is yet another sign of the constantly growing interest in Italian design, which is considered by Russian consumers to be an example of high standards of quality.

Manufacturing enterprises form the basis of the interior design industry, and a comprehensive study of their names from a linguistic and historical perspective can be a rich source of data that provides insight into the Italian national identity. This study will not discuss the commercial success of individual companies, since that is a topic for market research, and will instead focus on the linguistic component of company names in all their diversity.

Italian companies account for the majority of interior design industry enterprises, and as such have to maximise the distinctiveness of their brand names to ensure they are recognisable and memorable in both domestic and international interior design markets (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Research in the field of naming strategies is relevant because it provides the opportunity to monitor whether a linguistic (usually etymological or semantic) component can, on its own, become an effective tool for branding and marketing and, by extension, for the company's success on the market (Bhat & Reddy, 2001). In other words, the subject matter of this article is the analysis of the linguistic component as manifested in a particular professional field in a certain country during a particular period of time – namely, in the Italian interior design industry from 2000 to 2010. The purpose of the study is to highlight the distinctive features of names used by Itali-

an businesses in the interior design industry during the aforementioned period. This aim dictates addressing the following objectives: establishing the key linguistic strategies for company naming in the Italian interior design industry during the above-mentioned period, and determining and justifying the most productive company naming strategy. The hypothesis of the study states that national identity is relevant to naming design businesses: in theory, naming has to follow the general branding and marketing laws of the international market targeted at the average global consumer, in addition to being culturally neutral (Keller, 2013).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Humankind had been inventing names since the dawn of its existence, yet there was no theory that would explain the process until the early 20th century. Technological breakthroughs, expansion of production, scientific development, growing competition as well as an increasing interest in human psychology and ways of influencing it – all these factors eventually enabled the development of naming theory in 1976 in the US. In general terms, it can be defined as the creation and giving of names to new products, services, brands, and companies (Sood & Keller, 2012).

Naming is the art of defining and embellishing an object in as few words as possible. It is also the science of finding a memorable and attractive name in order to position the object in the consciousness of the consumer in a particular way (Makkar & Yap, 2018). Nowadays, naming has become a separate field of research, which includes elements of linguistics, psychology, marketing, and other sciences.

Finding a striking and effective name is important both for emerging enterprises and new brands launched by established companies. Of all the characteristic features of a company, its name will be the first to elicit an emotional response from the consumer, and if that response is 'correct', then the name itself – and the product and its producer – will be sure to achieve success and better competitive performance (Grewal et al., 1998). Furthermore, names provide legal protec-

tion for products, services and companies, and play an important role in market promotion and effective communication with international partners (Chen & Bei, 2018).

In modern times, naming theory has become an area of great interest for a wide range of researchers. New naming methodologies are being developed, books and articles on the essence of naming are being published, existing names are being analysed, and strategies for effective name creation are being suggested. However, the goal of professional naming as a creative science is the creation of names themselves. It is a creative science and not simply an act of creating, because a name must not only be striking and memorable, but must also reflect the essence of what it represents (Myung-Soo, 2007). A name is not created on a whim, but is developed through the joint efforts of psychologists, linguists and marketing experts. Only then will it not simply sound nice, but also reflect the nature of the product and the philosophy of the company (Bao et al., 2008).

The Latin expression *Nomen est omen* epitomises the significance of naming. The information that a word carries is reflected on a number of levels: mental and emotional, conscious and subconscious. Apart from its direct meaning and emotional and stylistic connotations, a word also has history (etymology), structure (morphology), and aesthetics (euphony, graphics, rhythm). All these details are factored in when creating a company or product name. Associative fields also play a role in the naming process (Botton et al., 2002; Keller, 2013).

As for the linguistic criteria for choosing a company name, these can be divided into two types: phonetic criteria and semantic criteria. Within the phonetic criterion of naming, the word in question is examined from the perspective of its phonemes, the speech mechanisms involved in producing them, and how they correspond to the phonetic structure of a particular language. According to the phonetic criterion, a name should be easy to pronounce and be in line with the phonetic structures of the language, meaning it should consist of syllables set together in a fashion typical of the

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language in question (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018). This naming parameter is also defined as the psycholinguistic naming criterion: any combination of sounds will evoke in the recipient a set of associations with the source of the sounds and their meaning. Associations between certain sounds and corresponding meanings are mostly stable and definable. The sound of the word should not produce any negative associations or emotions – a requirement that is especially relevant for made-up names (Lowrey & Shrum, 2007). For instance, traditional phonetic stereotypes suggest that the presence of vowels (especially *a* and *i*) is pleasing to the ear. It is preferable to avoid sibilants and the sound *r* – these convey a sense of alarm and threat. Names that start with the letters *C*, *S*, and *B* are seen as traditional and classic, whereas the letters *X*, *Z*, *Q*, and *V* have more of an innovative air. Moreover, the letters *L*, *V*, *F*, and *W* are perceived as feminine, whereas *X*, *M*, and *Z* tend to be associated with masculinity. These are only a few of the conclusions that experts at the brand naming company *Strategic Name Development* had come to in their research (Kapoor & Heslop, 2009). Their experiments showed how associations created by certain sound combinations influenced text perception. Phonosemantic analysis of words and texts is the cornerstone of the modern-day approach to naming theory. Thus, the phonetic criterion has to do with the unconscious descriptive associations evoked by the sound of the word (Fenko et al., 2016).

The lexical (denotative) criterion for choosing a company name directly involves the meaning of a word, seeing as a name requires a certain semantic image. In the naming process, all established

meanings of a word are uncovered, and if even one of those definitions does fit the idea that the creators want to attach to the name, that word will get turned down. That is the semantic aspect of the lexical naming criterion. Etymological dictionaries must also be consulted, since the meanings of words tend to change over time, and their original meaning might not be found in modern dictionaries any more. That is the etymological aspect of the lexical (denotative) naming criterion (Arora et al., 2015).

The third important aspect of the lexical (denotative) naming criterion is the associative aspect. A brand manager must examine which associations the new name produces. The main goal of such an analysis is to ascertain that there are no negative associations in play. It is also important to avoid unnecessary associations that do not relate to the key values of the target audience (Francis et al., 2002).

The name of a company is also important for entering the international market and for its global development, which is why the process of creating a new name goes together with the concepts of internationalism and cross-cultural communication (Candi et al., 2017). The same words or sound combinations can have varying connotations depending on the country and culture, which is why an important part of the naming process is making sure that the name in question does not evoke any negative or inimical associations. A poorly chosen name can have a devastating effect on business, alienating both consumers and potential partners.

The theoretical basis for this research relies on a number of publications on branding (Botton et al., 2002; Keller, 2013). According to their studies, the most widespread naming strategies are based on the use of neologisms, words in everyday use, proper nouns and geographical names, borrowings from other languages, abbreviations, alliterations, onomatopoeia, analogies, metonymies, compounds (word blending), oxymorons, and metaphors.

Naming through neologisms means using words that do not actually exist in the language. The main advantage of this method is that these

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words have no previous 'history', no established meaning, allowing the owners of the company to imbue these words with whatever meaning they choose (Rahman, 2013). This strategy is not without drawbacks: a word with an established meaning can be more easily memorised, whereas a neologism still needs meaning. To come up with a suitable neologism, one will have to consider the principles of word formation in different languages to create a word that imitates a language and function within a unique context.

Words in everyday use are implemented to create names that reflect the company's line of business or the application area of the product. This naming strategy limits the consumers' associations and gives them direction.

Proper nouns and geographical names were a very popular naming strategy up until the early twentieth century. Before that, company owners had no need for unusual and original names – they would simply give the company their first or last names. This strategy underlined the idea of continuous family lineage – even with no actual descendants left, the family name would live on through the company name.

Old companies that are still on the market have, at some point, borne the names of their founders, and this naming strategy is among the most popular for modern companies as well. An undeniable advantage of proper names is that they instil trust and are associated with quality, with a real person and their life story (Michel & Donthu,

2014). When a company uses the last name of its owner, the consumer gets the impression that the owner is personally responsible for the quality of the product. However, there are also drawbacks to this naming strategy: firstly, such names can be hard to memorise, and secondly, if the company is sold, the name of the previous owner will no longer be a valid biographical reference (Fu et al., 2007).

As for geographical names, these are used when a company wants to denote the region of production, provided the current or historical location of the company can be used to the advantage of business. For example, *Fiuggi* mineral water reminds the consumer of the famed resort in central Italy, and the *Montblanc* brand, named after the highest mountain peak in Europe, is known as the leading producer of luxury writing implements.

If a name consists of a foreign word that is unknown to the customer, they will perceive it simply as a combination of sounds, regardless of its actual meaning. Perfume manufacturers often use borrowings from French in the names of their products, lending them an air of romance due to particular phonetic associations. Restaurants often choose names that will be associated with the type of cuisine that they serve. Another reason for using words from another language in company names is the desire to expand business beyond the domestic market (Samu & Krishnan, 2010). In this case, borrowings from English occur more often, since English is the current global *Lingua Franca*.

The use of abbreviations in the names of companies and products was rather fashionable in Europe in the 1960-70s, but this strategy can present serious flaws. Abbreviations are not always meaningful, or the meaning of the abbreviated words does transpire; oftentimes, abbreviations are simply difficult to memorise.

Alliteration is a naming strategy that involves the repetition of syllables or phonemes in order to create rhythm and rhyme (Lowrey & Shrum, 2007), making it easier to remember new words – an important feature for young companies. Examples of alliterative naming include *Criss Cross*, *Peg-Perego*, and many others.

Similar to alliteration is the onomatopoeic naming strategy, which uses already existing or made-up words whose sound is reminiscent of certain features of the product which the name denotes. Onomatopoeic names like *Schweppees* are rather widespread.

Naming by analogy basically involves using a well-known word, concept, or name without introducing any changes. Often these are names from myths or history, names of stars, archaic words, names of literary or movie characters, names of plants and animals, or simply euphonious words that evoke the appropriate associations (Del Rio et al., 2001).

Naming by adjacency, where a part is made to represent the whole or the whole is reduced to one of its parts, can be characterised as metonymical. Examples include wines that are named after their region of production, for instance, *Chianti* or *Valpolicella*.

The compound name strategy involves blending different parts of several words or adding part of a word onto another word by: adding roots or endings from old words to a root of a modern word; giving the root of a word affixes and/or endings from another language; blending existing words in order to create neologisms; blending semantic and phonetic elements; blending different parts of speech; blending morphologically different elements (e.g. a numeral and a part of a word) (Carrol, 1985).

An example of a rather effective use of the compound name strategy is the Swiss watch brand *Swatch*, whose name is a portmanteau of two parts of speech: the adjective *Swiss* and the noun *watch*.

Oxymorons – combinations of words with opposite meaning – are also used in the naming process, as in *True lies*.

Naming through metaphor involves using an established word or term in the name in order to attract attention to something new. Neologisms can also become metaphors, provided they are imbued with an easily inferable meaning. Examples of company names created by means of this strategy include *Coldrex*, *Dr. Mom*, and *Whirlpool*.

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Thus, both linguistic and cultural factors need to be considered when developing a company name. This process follows a set of rules and conforms to one of the many naming strategies that modern-day naming theory has to offer. The process of naming will exhibit differing features depending on the particular sector of industry.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study aims to examine the extent to which the names of Italian interior design companies correspond to the established naming practices of companies, to identify the strategies used therein, and to develop a classification of names based on etymological and semantic analysis. The classification proposed by Cellotto (2005), who studies Italian company names in a wide range of industries, has served as a foundation for our own nomenclature of interior design company names:

(1) proper names: last name (*Barilla*), first and last name (*Giorgio Armani*), mythological name (*Mercurio*), historic name (*Napoleone*), character name (*Ariel*), geographical name (*Montblanc*);

(2) words in everyday use: nouns (*Vespa*), adjectives (*Perugina*), verbs (*Nevica*), adverbs (*Avanti!*);

(3) words with no lexical meaning: pseudonyms (*Xelion*), compound names (*Swatch*), onomatopoeic names (*Tic-tac*);

(4) composite names: short expressions (*Mangia-bevi*), mottos (*Forza Italia*), collocations (*Mulino Bianco*), compounds (*Palmolive*), adjective + geographical name (*Bella Napoli*), proper noun + common noun (*Acqua di Gio*);

(5) abbreviations (*FIAT*).

The study has used the following reference sources to analyse the names of Italian interior design companies:

(1) *iSaloni WorldWide Moscow* exhibition catalogues, with a complete list of exhibitors and links to homepages of Italian companies;

(2) *iSaloni Milano* exhibition catalogues;

(3) Italian Trade Agency (ICE) statistics and publications, which is responsible for promoting trade exchange and business cooperation between Italian and foreign companies;

(4) Italian interior design periodicals such as *AD*, *Interni*, *Abitare*, *BravaCasa*, *Showcase*, *Light-design*;

(5) information provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat).

We were able to analyse 342 companies that manufacture furniture, light fixtures, fabrics, and other design accessories. Our selection criteria included the frequency with which a company is mentioned in Italian and Russian specialised periodicals, minimum ten years of participating in professional trade fairs in Italy as well as participation in major exhibitions in Russia including *MEBEL* and *iSaloni WorldWide*.

Using continuous material sampling and quantitative analysis (the figures are presented as percentages), we created a classification of naming strategies for Italian interior design companies. We have also conducted an etymological and semantic analysis of company names across the Italian design industry.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

Over the centuries, furniture, light fixtures, and other interior design accessories in Italy have been primarily crafted by hand. As our analysis of Italian companies that are branch leaders and long-time participants in international exhibitions has demonstrated, only 9 out of 342 factories date back to the 19th century, such as *Modenese Gastone di Modenese Renzo e Francesco* (1818) or *BetaMobili* (1890). They are pioneers of the interior design industry in Italy, possessing traditions and secret manufacturing techniques handed down from father to son. Starting in small work-

shops where skilled craftsmen were manufacturing traditional hardwood furniture, lamps of brass or forged iron, curtains and lampshades made with pure fabrics, by the mid-twentieth century they had expanded into large-scale businesses, while preserving and reinforcing traditions of previous generations of skilled professionals (Lojacono, 2003).

The upsurge in the Italian furniture industry, along with a substantial increase in the number of large, small, and medium-sized companies operating in it, corresponds to the years of the Italian economic boom and the subsequent decade. 31.8% of factories reviewed in this study were founded in the 1960s; it is during this period that major companies such as *Passeri International* (1961), *Zanaboni* (1967), *Grande Arredo* (1969), *Swan Italia* (1963) and many others emerge. 22.3% of all businesses examined were created in the 1970s, also indicating an upswing. Such companies as *Flexform* (1970), *Poliform* (1970), *Provasi* (1978) were established during this decade. 18.2% of the companies examined have emerged over the last three decades. The economic upswing saw the formation of Italy's key manufacturing regions for furniture, light fixtures, and textiles, the leading ones being Tuscany (e.g. *Passeri International*, 1961), Lombardy (*Provasi*, 1980), and Veneto (*Casamania*, 1984). These three Italian regions account for 304 out of 342 Italian interior design companies that we have studied. This is due not only to their heritage, but also to their aggressive marketing policies.

Italian businesses have never turned to branding agencies to come up with company names, seeing as it was not common practice in Italy during the years when the most prominent interior design companies emerged. Names were suggested by their respective founders, and the most favourable option was to give the company their family name. Such names proved to be a good choice as they were familiar to everyone who knew the owner of the factory. At that point no consideration was given to how a family name would be pronounced in another language (Lojacono, 2003, p. 60).

The structure of the company name also became relevant. Generally, longer names are harder to memorise than those comprised of a single word (Bresciani & Del Ponte, 2017). According to our analysis, 33.4% of Italian interior design company names have only one word in them. Names that contain two words account for 34.1% of the total number of companies studied; the remaining 32.5% are names that have three or more words. Thus, these groups are effectively equal in the number of names in each. In our research, we did, however, encounter an interesting phenomenon: if a company's name is a combination of two or more parts, it is the shorter part (not necessarily the first part) that is more likely to be remembered and therefore reproduced in the course of communication. We can see full names in interior design magazines and on websites, for instance, *Riva Mobili d'arte*, but the name is shortened to *Riva* for marketing campaigns.

Analysing the denotative component of naming strategies, we had to modify the classification presented by Cellotto (2005), singling out the following naming categories: Proper Nouns, Geographical Names, Words and Phrases in Everyday Use, and Abbreviations. Firstly, the study only included companies bearing names of actual people in the Proper Nouns category and singled out Geographical Names as a separate naming type for the Italian interior design companies who find regional labelling important. We propose that the categories 'words in everyday use' and 'composite names' be merged into one group which we call Words and Phrases in Everyday Use, seeing as they vary in form, but not in substance, making use of the same naming methods. This group includes company names that do not have a proper noun in them. Moreover, we have found that the naming category 'names without lexical meaning', proposed by Cellotto (2005), is only seldom present in the interior design industry, so we do not place them in a specific group, but rather examine them as part of other naming strategies.

Naming via proper nouns is the most widely-used and versatile naming strategy among Italian interior design companies and is found in 54.4%

of all names studied. The branding practice of a company using a proper noun, singled out by Cellotto (2005) and others as the leading branding method, is one of the earliest and most common practices to date. The family name preserves traditions passed down from one generation to the next, so it is unsurprising that the same trend can be clearly traced among names of Italian interior design companies (Bresciani & Del Ponte, 2017).

Approximately one third of names with proper nouns contain the last name of the individual who opened a workshop for handling wood, iron, or glass several decades ago. Among the many examples are factories such as *Bernini*, *Scavolini*, *Zanotta*, and others. Factory names are created either by using only one last name or by combining two last names (*Tettamanzi e Erba*).

In some names of factories – for example, *Agostoni Figli di Isacco di Agostoni Marco* – we find the word *figli*, which means ‘children’. This underlines the continuity of generations, a feature that is very important for Italians. Another group that stands out incorporates companies whose brand names use, alongside their last name, the word *fratelli*, i.e. ‘brothers’ – another important concept for Italians. Such names amount to 5% of all the company names studied herein (e.g. *Fratelli Allievi*, *Fratello Citterio*). The name in this case becomes a reflection of historical features, namely the fact that the company was founded by none other than brothers – relatives who preserve the secrets of craftsmanship within the (extended) family. Today, usually only family members work in factories that proudly bear the name *Fratelli*. Keeping production within the family is a characteristic feature of the Italian furniture industry as a whole.

The mid-20th century saw the appearance of a tendency to expand company names that include proper nouns. This is done by adding a word describing the company’s line of work to the last name of the founder or current owner of the company (a pattern observed in 19.8% of names studied, e.g. *Pigoli Salotti*, *Bontempi Cucine*, *Poltrona Frau*, *Solari Illuminazione*). Adding a reference to the company’s product makes the name of the manufacturer more specific and functional.

The words used to characterise a company’s product or style are often borrowings from the English language (e.g. *Fendi Casa Club House Italia*, *Vismara Design*, *Facondini Contract & Home Division*, *Rugiano Interiors Decoration*, *Morelato Contemporary*). These examples demonstrate how the name of the founder acquires an ‘international’ connotation while remaining the main communicative element.

Thus, we have examined the Proper Nouns category that offers company names that inspire confidence in the consumer, infer quality and exclusivity, and suggest that the company is personally responsible for the hand-made product they sell.

In Cellotto’s (2005) typology of names, the ‘geographical names’ naming strategy is merely a subdivision of the ‘proper nouns’ group. We, however, propose to classify it as a separate category, given how clearly it can be traced throughout the names of Italian companies in the interior design industry. 5.9% of all the company names that we have studied contain a geographical name that indicates the region or city in which the factory is located. Among the main approaches used to form this type of name are blending (*Pataviumart*), including borrowed words (*Florence Collection*), or combining a geographical name with another part of speech (*L’Antica Bassano*, *L’Antica Deruta*).

The second most productive naming strategy is Words and Phrases in Everyday Use. Such company names make up 26.6% of the total number of enterprise names studied. This group makes use of everyday words instead of proper nouns (e.g. *Stella del Mobile*, *Arte di Murano*, *Maestri Artigiani*, *Forme di luce creativa*). It is in this name group that the semantic aspect becomes particularly relevant. For example, the name of the factory *La vecchia marina* refers to an interesting story depicting love of tradition. The founder of the company, a skilled craftsman and expert in naval architecture, was once walking along the seashore in the port city of Livorno after a severe storm when he saw a ship’s wheel half-buried in the sand. He brought it to his workshop and restored it to its former beauty. After some time, his workshop decided to devote themselves to interior design projects that would make

use of furniture from ancient ships. Thus, a small workshop eventually turned into a large company which is credited with creating a unique and original interior design style known as Antique Maritime Style (Lojacono, 2003, p. 84).

Another way of forming names of this type is using borrowings. Our analysis has shown that the tendency to use foreign words, mainly of English origin, in the names of Italian companies in the interior design industry had gradually increased by the middle of the 20th century. Of all the company names included in this study, 18.8% feature a borrowed word or phrase. It is no coincidence that English becomes the main source for borrowings – the companies use them because they wish to enter the international market (Buschgens et al., 2019). Often a borrowing from another language is used as a more prestigious and fashionable alternative to a similar word in Italian. Such English words as *style*, *collection*, *interiors*, *international* are often used in company names instead of the corresponding Italian words *stile*, *collezione*, *interni*, *internazionale* (e.g. *Florence Collections*, *Gamma Arredamenti International*).

The economic boom in Italy saw the emergence of many small and medium-sized enterprises that produce modern-style furniture, lamps and design accessories for the home and office. Their names tend to reflect the company's product while giving it a certain English air (e.g. *Milano Bedding*, *Poliform*). In addition to English borrowings, one can also find some French words (*Epoque*, *Désirée*) in the names of interior design companies.

Another notable feature of company names that becomes apparent in the interior design industry in the mid-1970s is abbreviations – they are present in 13.1% of company names analysed, making them the third most productive naming strategy amongst the ones identified in the study. Almost all of these abbreviations contain an encoded proper noun. This once more confirms the observation that the majority of factories in Italy are family-owned, and that the preservation of family traditions is paramount to Italians. The use of acronyms is also observed as part of this strategy (*G.T. di Gianni Tonin*).

'It is no coincidence that English becomes the main source for borrowings – the companies use them because they wish to enter the international market'

Another group of Italian companies in the interior design industry, comprising 6.4% of company names studied, creates their names by attaching the English abbreviation & C. to a proper noun. As a rule, these companies also hire workers, thus not keeping production strictly within the family – a fact that becomes reflected in the name (e.g. *Angelo Cappellini & C.*). One should note that the abbreviation & C. in this case does not constitute a legal term.

One particular type of abbreviation that can be distinguished is that in which the words abbreviated provide information about the company's product, making the brand name easier to memorise. For example, *A.C.F. (Artistiche Ceramiche Fiorentine)* – a company from Florence – manufactures chandeliers and ceramic design objects.

Thus, the typology of names proposed by Celotto (2005) is generally applicable to the names of Italian interior design companies; however, we have found that the most productive naming strategies are the ones that involve proper nouns.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this study is that there is a relationship between the names of Italian companies in the interior design industry and the traditions of the Italian people. Indeed, the concept of 'home sweet home', of continuous home improvement that is inextricably linked to the idea of procreation, is clearly traceable in the names of Italian interior design companies. This is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of companies include the name of their founder or current owner in the brand name. Most importantly, the use of a last name suggests a direct involvement of the owner in the manufacturing process; therefore, they are presumed to be personally responsible to the consumer for the products and services provided.

‘Manufacturers of furniture and other interior design objects conceptualise each of their products to be a work of art that has been made according to tradition, balancing antiquity with modernity, and luxury with style’

Using a proper noun in the name of a company thus becomes a form of evidence for positive character traits of the owner. The abundance of last names, proper nouns and words like *fratelli* and *figli* in company names shows that family-owned production is typical of the Italian furniture and interior design industry as a whole.

Words from foreign languages have spread more and more through different fields of human activity in Italy, having their effect on the interior design industry as well. Our study has shown that in the 1960s-80s there was a tendency in Italy to use borrowings in company names, to rename companies accordingly, or to replace some of the Italian words in company names with equivalent words from another language (mostly English). Italy, as a member of the global community, thus enters new markets and finds new business partners. The use of this naming strategy creates an image of Italians as responsible businesspeople who set very particular strategic goals and wish to take a leading position in their field, while preserving a distinctively Italian ‘flavour’ for their brands.

Regional identity, being an important part of the Italian worldview, is also reflected in company names across the interior design industry. Putting the city or region of production in the company name indicates the owners’ wish to underline their place of origin as well as the Italians’ affection for their home regions in general.

Italians tend to have a strong emotional connection to art and history, which might explain the frequency of words such as *arte*, *maestri*, *vecchia*, *antica* in the names of Italian interior design companies. Manufacturers of furniture and other interior design objects conceptualise each of their products to be a work of art that has been made ac-

ording to tradition, balancing antiquity with modernity, and luxury with style.

By examining the etymological and semantic aspects of Italian company names in the interior design industry, we have been able to group the most common naming strategies into four categories that appear the most productive: Proper Nouns (54.4% of all names studied), Words and Phrases in Everyday Use (26.6%), Abbreviations (13.1%), Geographical Names (5.9%). The use of proper nouns prevails within Italian interior design companies – in contrast to the classification proposed by Cellotto (2005), in which this naming strategy is considered to be only the third most frequent. However, in cases where the first and last names of the owner (founder) are ‘encumbered’ with a string of other words, the company name will inevitably undergo reduction to ease the process of communication. For example, *Paolo Lucchetta Multipli d’Arte per L’Arredamento* becomes simply *Paolo Lucchetta*.

The Words and Phrases in Everyday Use category turned out to be the second most productive, suggesting that what the consumer wishes to buy is more than just an interior design product. It is a concept, an image created by the manufacturer. A concept is more easily expressed by using a common noun with a descriptor – a qualitative or relative adjective. Concepts expressed in a single word proved the most effective and therefore the most persistent, whereas structurally complex company names are fully preserved in the communication process only in cases when their reduction makes no sense (*La vecchia marina*). This strategy also involves borrowings, mainly from the English language, but with individual borrowings from French as well. Using borrowed words gives company names additional connotations that provide associations with fame, world-class quality, and following trends.

The significant difference in the usage frequency of the naming strategies Proper Nouns (54.3%) and Abbreviations (13.2%) is due to historical circumstances. The first type was in use continuously throughout the whole of the 20th century, whereas the second type only started forming in the 1970s.

Besides, most abbreviations are simply the initials of the founder or current owner of the company, and do not provide any information to the potential buyer.

The Geographical Names strategy turned out to be unexpectedly unproductive – this type of company naming is mainly present in the Italian food and winemaking industry. Having studied the main Italian regions for furniture, lighting, and textiles production that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, with Tuscany, Lombardy, and Veneto in the lead, one must note that toponym-based com-

pany names bear a clear relation to these regions, as in *Tosconova*. The geographical name will in most cases correspond to the region or city where production is located.

Notably, a neologism as a part of a company name has only been observed in one example, even though Cellotto (2005) considers it to be the most productive type of brand naming. This is primarily because this naming strategy is mainly used to name trademarks, brands and individual products rather than the manufacturing companies themselves.

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