

Consumer Preferences for Gender Representation in Business Names in Balongbendo District: A Sociolinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe consumer preferences for gender representation in business names in Balongbendo sub-district. The sociolinguistic approach is used in this study to examine the sociological relationship between society and language use, which in this study is related to the selection of business names. This type of research is qualitative-descriptive, with data collection methods in the form of observation and interview methods. After the data is collected, it is analyzed using a content analysis technique. The results of this study show that 1) people's perceptions of business names are generally influenced by various factors such as the strength of branding, personal relationships with business owners, visual appearance of banners, and the types of products offered. 2) Gender representation in business names is interpreted by the community as a reflection of certain social identities and values. Women's names in business are associated with warmth, authenticity, and domestic skills, while men's names are perceived as neutral, professional, and able to reach a wider consumer segment. 3) The influence of gender representation on consumer preferences shows the existence of social segmentation in purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Consumer, Gender, Sociolinguistics, Branding.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the times, accompanied by globalization, has brought about major changes in people's consumption behavior. Consumers not only consider the quality of the product or service, but also various other aspects such as price, promotion, reputation, and symbolic factors such as business name. Consumer preference is an important factor that determines the success of a product or service in the market. Consumer preferences are influenced by the perceptions, attitudes, and values that individuals hold in making purchasing decisions (Shiffman & L.G. Kanuk, 2004). Consumers not only pay attention to the products or services offered, but also how the identity of the business is built through elements such as the name, which often reflects certain social and cultural values.

The business name becomes the initial representation of the business identity itself, so it plays an important role in building consumer perceptions. The choice of business name is one of the important strategies in attracting attention and building consumer trust. Choosing a business name is a fundamental and crucial step in the process of creating personal branding for a business. The business name not only serves as a representation of brand identity, but also has a strategic role in building emotional

relationships with consumers (Knapp, 2000). A well-chosen name not only serves as a differentiating tool from other brands, but also brings added value and forms strong associations in consumers' perceptions, especially regarding the quality and level of satisfaction they feel. In this context, the brand name becomes the initial signal captured by consumers and has the potential to create positive meaning in their minds. Therefore, the selection of an effective brand name has a major influence on the success of a product or service in the market.

In business naming, one of the interesting elements that can be observed is gender representation, namely the use of names or attributes that refer to male or female gender. This phenomenon is evident in many areas, including Balongbendo Subdistrict, where several Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) choose to use names that explicitly indicate gender, such as Bakso Cak Min (referring to men) or Warung Mak Yem (referring to women). These names are usually determined based on the name of the business owner, the name of the child, and the name of the family who inherited the business. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon is related to the study of the relationship between language and society, especially how language, in this case business naming, can reflect social structure, values, and group identity.

Language can represent social groups constructing their identity and how that identity is perceived by the group (Wardhaugh, 2006). Sociolinguistics, as a branch of linguistics that combines the disciplines of sociology and linguistics, aims to deal with problems that arise in society, especially in the realm of language (Chaer & Agustina, 2010). In the context of gender representation, sociolinguistics also discusses the concept of language ideology, namely social beliefs about how language reflects, maintains, or challenges social power (Schieffelin et al., 1998). The choice to use a male or female name can stem from sociocultural assumptions about gender roles in the business world.

Butler (1990) states that gender is not only based on biological categories, but also performative. Therefore, the performative nature of gender can be realized and constructed through actions, behavior, and language used, including in daily interactions. Gender representation in language, including in business naming, reflects people's lives in associating male or female identity with certain images - such as strength, gentleness, professionalism, or warmth. In the commercial realm, choosing a gendered business name is not neutral, as it can shape social perceptions and influence consumer responses. This demonstrates that language practices, specifically the choice of business names, are ideological arenas where gender meanings are negotiated and reproduced in everyday life.

This research seeks to further examine how consumer preferences in choosing services/products from a business are based on gender representation in the business name. So that the following research questions/problem formulations can be formulated:

1) How do Balongbendo people perceive business names in general? 2) How do the people of Balongbendo interpret gender representations contained in business names? 3) How does gender representation in business names affect consumer preferences in choosing products or services?

Through sociolinguistic studies, the study aims to describe consumer preferences towards gender representation in business names in Balongbendo sub-district. This study is important because until now, studies on consumer preferences in relation to gender representation in business names, especially in a local context such as in Balongbendo Sub-district, are still rare. Thus, theoretically, this study is expected to add insight into the field of sociolinguistics, particularly on the relationship between language, gender identity, and consumption behavior. Also, practically, this research is expected to provide input to local business actors on the importance of business naming strategies based on market perceptions.

Based on a literature review through review of various studies that have been conducted previously. Research related to consumer preferences has been conducted by (Manafe & Anigomang, 2021), The study aims to determine the factors that influence consumer preferences in buying cracker products at CV. Panda Unyil Crackers Sidoarjo. The method used is a subjective qualitative approach with the interview method. The results showed that consumers buy these cracker products because of taste preferences as the main factor, then price, and finally based on packaging.

Furthermore, previous research related to business naming has been conducted by (Yusup et al., 2024) which aims to find the intentions of local culinary business owners in Makassar City in determining their business brand names, as well as showing the relationship between image and brand naming in their culinary businesses. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with an interview method. Through a sociolinguistic perspective, the research found that the purpose of naming foreign languages in some business names is to increase selling value, prestige, and expand local or international target markets.

The previous research has been conducted by (Wahyuni, 2024) which aims to describe the language attitude of the community seen in the use of language in the linguistic landscape in Brem Tourism Village, Kaliabu. The research method used is descriptive-qualitative with an observation method. Through semantic and sociolinguistic perspectives, the research results show that the people in the village still maintain local and national languages in their social life, seen from the dominance of monolingual language codes compared to bilingual, naming patterns are dominated by two-word arrangements with the pattern (n) + (n), and the language attitudes shown by the community towards Indonesian and Javanese are positive, while attitudes towards foreign languages are negative.

Finally, previous research related to business place naming has been conducted by (Fatikhudin, 2018) which aims to find name formation, imaging schemes, and foreign-language business place name matching in Surabaya. The method used is descriptive qualitative with observation, listening, and recording methods. Through a semantic perspective, the research found that the use of foreign languages in naming business places conceptualizes ideas and exclusivity and shows the trend of name formation by imaging entities in the business place environment that the name maker is unaware of.

Referring to previous studies, no research has been found related to consumer preferences for business names associated with gender representation in the naming and studied through a sociolinguistic perspective. So, this research will fill the academic gap by further examining consumer preferences in choosing products or services that have gender representations in their business names.

METHOD

This research focuses on analyzing language data that will be studied descriptively. The analysis is related to a method commonly referred to as qualitative method. The method intends to understand the phenomena contained in the object of study holistically with descriptions of words and language (Moloeng, 2017). The sociolinguistic approach is used in this study to reveal the use of language in society, which is related to the selection of business names. The data in this study are business names in Balongbendo sub-district that have elements of gender representation in the form of using female and male names. Data collection was conducted through observation and interview methods. Observations were made by observing the environment around Balongbendo sub-district and recording and documenting business names that use gender elements in them.

In the next stage, interviews were conducted through a random sampling technique by asking questions verbally to 4 informants who reside in Balongbendo village and were recorded with a voice recorder. After the data was collected, the transcription of the recording was made into text, and then the transcribed data was analyzed using content analysis techniques. The content analysis technique is carried out by analyzing the results of interviews that are connected to a certain context, related to individual groups or cultural attributes of informants, as well as relevant literature to strengthen the analysis (Krippendorff, 1989). Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the data and the results of the analysis to be able to answer the formulation of the problem that had been formulated earlier.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of data collection from field observations, there are several business names in Balongbendo sub-district that use gender elements in the form of male and female names in their naming. The data is presented in the table as follows.

Table 1. Business names with male names.

No	Bussiness Names	Products/Services
1.	Bakso Cak Min	Meatball
2.	Bakso Cak Slamet	Meatball
3.	Warung Cak Duwan	Fried rice
4.	Prabu Tembakau	Cigarette
5.	Irull Cell	Internet Package
6.	Niki Cell	Internet Package
7.	Roti Ghani	Bread
8.	Naufal Laundry	Laundry

Table 2. Business names with female names.

No	Bussiness Names	Products/Services
1.	Rinta Food	Frozen Food
2.	Ais Pizza	Pizza
3.	Nafisa Collection	Women's clothing
4.	Fotocopy Raya	Printing
5.	Toko Ais	Printing
6.	Warung Bu Sumarti	Wrapped rice
7.	Warung Mak Yem	Wrapped rice
8.	Ana Florist	Florist
9.	Eky Salon	Salon
10.	Kedai Retha	Iced Tea and Meatballs

4.1. General Perception of Business Name

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that the first aspect that respondents pay attention to for a business name varies according to the experience and background of each informant. Informant 1 stated that the main thing to consider is the branding aspect. Branding in this case is defined as the attractiveness of the name that can build a business image in the minds of consumers. Meanwhile, Informant 2 highlighted that business names often come from the names of relatives or the business owners themselves. This shows a tendency in society to associate personal identity with their business as a strategy to build consumer trust. Informant 3 admitted that he first noticed the banner, which means that visual appearance plays a big role in drawing initial attention to the business name. Informant 4, on the other hand, highlighted the type of products sold, meaning that the focus is more on practical needs than the name itself. The

findings show that business names can function not only as identity markers, but also as pragmatic tools to attract consumers' attention through visual associations and the meaning of the products offered.

Furthermore, the influence of the business name on the interest in trying the service or product, informants gave diverse answers. Informant 1 stated that the business name does influence because name branding cannot be valued with money but is built through services and service quality. This means that a strong name can be an emotional stimulus that encourages consumers to try. However, Informant 2 argued that the name does not matter, as the main factor is the compatibility of the taste with the food or product being sold. This suggests that in certain contexts, consumers value quality more than name identity. Informant 3 was of a similar opinion, stating that the name of the business does not really matter, but rather the popularity of the business is what drives buying interest. Meanwhile, Informant 4 emphasized that a unique name can arouse curiosity, thus encouraging consumers to try it. Overall, the data indicates that in society, the function of a business name is not absolute but situational: for some consumers, a catchy name can be a gateway to trial interest, while for others, the experience of the product itself remains the main factor.

To consumers' interest in unique or familiar business names, informants showed different results. Informant 1 stated that he had been attracted, even attributing it to his buying experience at “Beli Kopi”, a business frequented by his close friends. This suggests a link between social factors (influence of friends) and interest in business names. In contrast, Informant 2 admitted that he never felt attracted by the name of the business, reinforcing the previous finding that the main factor is still product quality or popularity in the community. Informant 3 also stated that he was not specifically attracted to the name, but still felt curious if the business was visited a lot. On the other hand, Informant 4 confirmed that he had been attracted by a unique business name. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these results show that the uniqueness or familiarity of a business name can evoke certain feelings, such as curiosity or social attachment, but it still depends on the socio-economic context of each consumer.

4.2. Perceptions of Gender Representation in Business Names

Most informants stated that business names that use women's names, such as “Warung Bu Sumarti” or “Eky Salon”, create a certain impression - especially in relation to the authenticity of the cuisine, the connection to tradition, and social warmth. Informant 1 mentioned that stalls with women's names feel more authentic because they are considered to have recipes passed down through generations, while informant 2 emphasized the connection between women's names and products consumed by women. Informants 3 and 4 mentioned that female names can make it easier for consumers to recognize who owns the business, building closeness and trust. From a sociolinguistic

perspective, this reflects the phenomenon of gendered naming, which is how the gender identity of the business owner is reflected and influences social interpretation through language. This concept is closely related to language and identity, as explained by (McConnell-Ginet & Eckert, 2003), that the use of female names not only conveys who the owner is, but also activates certain social stereotypes and cultural expectations, such as motherhood, warmth, or gastronomy.

Meanwhile, business names that use male names, such as “Bengkel Pak Budi” or “Bakso Cak Min”, are perceived as more general, trusted, and reaching a wider range of consumers. Informant 1 mentioned that male sellers are generally synonymous with certain types of businesses, such as spicy food or cigarettes. Informant 2 stated that male business names are often more neutral and can reach a wide range of people, both men and women. In a sociolinguistic framework, this difference in perception shows how gender ideology in language influences the contribution of social value to names. Men's names in business contexts are perceived as more professional or neutral, while women's names are more personal and domestic. This is in line with the theory of language ideology, which is people's belief in the meanings carried by language in certain social contexts (Schieffelin et al., 1998).

In the simulation of two similar business names (e.g. “Warung Cak Duwan” and “Warung Mak Yem”), informants gave responses based on their sense of interest, the uniqueness of the name, and the way of presentation. For example, Informant 1 said that he would choose the business that he found attractive and had a good presentation. Other informants stated that they did not care about the name, if the taste of the food was appropriate. This finding reinforces that in language practice, business names are part of a pragmatic strategy, which means that their use is not only aimed at conveying identity, but also influencing consumers' social actions. In other words, business names work as performative linguistic actions and can shape consumer preferences and behavior based on initial impressions (Austin, 1962).

Furthermore, most informants stated that a business name can be a representation of service quality, especially when the name already has a certain reputation in the community. For example, a name such as “Warung Bu Kris” -which was not included in the data but was mentioned by informants because it is well-known-is considered to reflect quality and distinctive taste, and thus can be an indicator of trust. However, some other informants stated that the name does not necessarily reflect quality, especially for new businesses that are not widely known. This analysis can be linked to Bourdieu's (1991) symbolic concept that language (including business names) has symbolic value that functions as social capital. Names that already have social recognition tend to be believed to reflect high quality, while new names still must build that symbolic capital.

In this case, language is not only a means of communication, but also a tool to gain social legitimacy.

In addition, informants showed a tendency to trust businesses that use people's names more than general names such as "Warung Lezat". The main reason is that there is a clearer personal identity, so consumers can know who is responsible or directly involved in the service. For example, the name "Warung Bu Sumarti" is considered more personal and convincing, as it is directly associated with the seller's mother. This phenomenon shows the influence of personal deixis in language - the use of proper names to show closeness, authenticity, and direct responsibility. In sociolinguistics, this shows that personal names have a social deixis function. Brown (1987) states that personalized names can build interpersonal relationships between consumers and business owners. It also reflects the importance of the social face aspect in consumer interactions, so personal names give the impression that businesses maintain quality and trust directly.

4.3. Effect of Gender Representation on Consumer Preference

The interview results show that some informants recognized the significant influence of the naming aspect on consumer decisions. One informant even gave a quantitative rating of 7/10, indicating that business names that display gender identity - such as the use of the greeting "Mrs." or "Mr." can build a business image, create emotional closeness, and become an initial consideration before making a transaction. However, not all informants share this view. One respondent rated the influence of the business name as moderate, with a score of 5/10. This shows that in some contexts, the business name does count, but it is not the main factor in decision-making. Meanwhile, some informants are neutral and emphasize that if the business name is easy to remember and pronounce, it is linguistically effective enough to build a business image, without having to consider the gender aspect.

Some informants stated that business names using male names were considered to have more influence than female names, although both were still high on the preference scale. This suggests that there are certain socio-cultural associations attached to gender identity in a commercial context. For example, male names may be associated with perceptions of strength, professionalism, or technical expertise, while female names are often associated with warmth, emotional closeness, or domestic skills, particularly in the context of culinary ventures.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this finding can be viewed through the concept of language attitudes, which is an individual's affective judgment or response to a particular language variety or linguistic form. Gender identity expressed in business names functions as an indexical sign, as proposed by Durranti and Goodwin (1992),

which is a linguistic sign that refers to certain social categories and creates expectations in the minds of consumers. Thus, business names that contain gender elements not only represent who the owner is, but also mediate the symbolic relationship between business actors and society as consumers.

When informants were asked to express their views on the urgency of considering gender in business naming, a variety of responses emerged, representing the dynamics of social change in urban society. One informant explicitly rejected the use of gender identity in business names for reasons of relevance to the younger generation (Gen Z) market. For this informant, the business name should ideally not be tied to a particular gender representation, but rather be neutral and inclusive, making it more adaptive to contemporary market tastes. This attitude indicates a paradigm shift in naming practices, from being rooted in traditional values to a more flexible and universal branding strategy. On the other hand, other informants felt that it was important to consider gender, especially when tailored to the target market. In this case, the business name is positioned as a pragmatic instrument that can be adjusted to the demographic segmentation of consumers. For example, if a business targets female consumers, then a name that contains feminine nuances is considered more effective in building trust and increasing emotional connection. This view is rooted in the basic principles of social pragmatics, where language is strategically chosen and used according to social context and communicative purpose.

On the other hand, there are also informants who emphasize that naming a business by including the owner's identity can increase the credibility of the business itself. By explicitly mentioning the person's name, consumers are considered to know who is responsible for the quality of the product or service offered. In this context, the business name functions as a form of social deixis that builds relationships between producers and consumers through the closeness of identity. However, there is also a critical view that the open use of personal names in business is not always desirable. One informant mentioned that some people may be uncomfortable with having their names used as commercial identities, preferring to use pseudonyms or generic brand names. This view suggests that business naming practices should also consider ethical and privacy aspects, as well as the willingness of individuals to publicize their personal identity in the economic space.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of data analysis obtained through observation and in-depth interviews, it was found that gender representation in business names in Balongbendo Sub-district has an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences, although the degree of influence is relative and situational. This study found that, 1)

people's perceptions of business names are generally influenced by various factors such as the strength of branding, personal relationship with the business owner, visual appearance of banners, and the type of products offered. Business names are not only seen as identity labels, but also as pragmatic tools capable of building emotional appeal and shaping social images in the minds of consumers, 2) gender representation in business names is interpreted by the public as a reflection of certain social identities and values. Women's names in business, for example, are associated with warmth, authenticity, and domestic skills, while men's names are perceived as neutral, professional, and able to reach a wider consumer segment.

This finding reinforces that language-in this case the business name-works as an ideological marker that negotiates the social role of gender in the commercial space, 3) the influence of gender representation on consumer preferences shows the existence of social segmentation in purchasing decisions. Some informants stated that gender has a considerable influence in building trust and emotional closeness to the business, while others considered that product quality remains the dominant factor. However, business names that contain personal identity (self-name) are considered more credible because they display aspects of clarity of identity and responsibility, showing the function of social deixis in economic interaction.

Overall, this study shows that business naming strategies that consider aspects of gender and personal identity have significant symbolic and pragmatic values in building relationships between producers and consumers. In the sociolinguistic context, business names not only represent the owner, but also become a medium for shaping social meanings, gender expectations, and consumption practices in local communities. Therefore, business actors are expected to consider linguistic aspects more strategically and adaptively in designing their business identity in accordance with social dynamics and market segmentation.

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(Received 20 May 2025; revision received 14 June 2025;
 accepted 16 June 2025; final revision received 27 June 2025)