

## BELOW THE (SOUND) SURFACE – THE HIDDEN SEMANTICS OF ITALIAN SUFFIXES WITHIN GERMAN BRAND NAMES

**NOMEN EST OMEN** – this saying is especially true about brand names as they have to be memorable and catch consumers' attention. Brand names of contemporary German are particularly characterized by Italian modification suffixes, which is due to the fact that (1) in contrast to German, the Italian language has a great number of suffixes (-ino, -etto, -ello; -one etc.) which (2) can be combined with different parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs and numerals) and (3) are characterized by semantic variety.

My study concerning 50 brand names of the German language area created by derivation has shown that Italian suffixes are added to German, Italian, pseudo-Italian or other exogenous stems, that they are motivated on different linguistic levels and that their usage within German brand names – despite the fact that advertising language is not submitted to grammatical rules – is highly regular. They are not only congruent **morphologically**, **graphemically**, and **phonetically** with their use in Italian standardized language, but also **semantically**, meaning that diminutive suffixes, for example, have a quantitatively modifying effect on the root of brand names or contain relational meaning.

Even though German brand names with Italian suffixes can be analysed analytically, we can assume that brand names (in contrast to general language word formations) are not morphosemantically motivated at first glance, but phonetic-phonemically. This means that the brand names evoke positive holiday memories through the great vocalic variety, the open syllables, and the final vowels of Italian lexemes and morphemes.

My PhD project aims at examining those considerations empirically (via survey by questionnaire) and widening the topic not only by a diachronic perspective but also by including another popular Romance language in the German language area: French.

My senior thesis investigated – based upon introspection – the effects of Italian suffixes within brand names. In my PhD thesis I want to verify my considerations empirically and determine if Italian or French language knowledge is a precondition for semantic decoding of brand names with suffixes from these two languages.

My empirical research will furthermore include aspects of sound symbolism (→ **Lautsymbolik**). KLINK's studies (2000-2014) concern the sound symbolism of product names, but as they are orientated "primär (werbe)psychologisch" (ELSEN 2016: 185), ELSEN summarizes that his "Verzicht auf linguistische Beteiligung" means "einen Nachteil bei der Ergebnisfindung" (ibid.).



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### Corpus:

- 50 German discount brand names that I divided into three categories:
  - (1) **italianisms** → *Bellina, Cassetti*
  - (2) **pseudoitalianisms** → *Gelatelli, Cremino*
  - (3) **hybridisms** → *Knusperone, Linessa*

### Main questions of my research:

- Why are Italian suffixes used to create German brand names?
- What are their distinguishing qualities?
- What are their advantages in comparison to German suffixes?
- Can brand names with Italian suffixes be analysed analytically?