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Can Firmonyms Be Viewed in Their Design Context? Introduction to Research Methods

Czy firmonimy można rozpatrywać w kontekście projektowym?
Wprowadzenie do problematyki badań

In recent years, many works on the subject of design were published in Poland, whereas the term itself is understood in two ways: in a broad sense, as referring to utility objects and works of art, thus, meaning their appearance; or in a narrower sense, being synonymous with the design process itself. Both of the above areas of use of the term *design* (Pol. *dizajn*)[1] may apply to both product design and graphic design. Accordingly to the above, in the past decade, completely new publishing houses, specializing in design issues, were created. For example, "Karakter" and "d2d.pl" publishing houses, established in 2008, are today one of the most dynamically developing book companies in the country and definitely the best, which will publish books related to typography and design. Over the last few years, they have been publishing best-sellers, which are popular not only among experts in contemporary and old design, graphic designers, but also humanists and book lovers in general. Worth mentioning are, for example, such titles as: *Widzieć/Wiedzieć. Wybór najważniejszych tekstów o dizajnie* (2011), *Dizajn na co dzień* (2018), *B jak Bauhaus. Alfabet współczesności* (2014) or *Historia projektowania graficznego* (2018). More and more texts by Polish authors are also based on a methodology popularly known as "the return to things", as exemplified by such titles as: *Jak przestałem kochać design* by Marcin Wicha (2015) or *Rzeczy, których nie wyrzuciłem*

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[1] In many publications such a Polonized record of this word has already been accepted.

(2017) by the same author; *Duchologia polska. Rzeczy i ludzie w latach transformacji* by Olga Drenda (2016); *Polski dizajn* by Irma Kozina (2015), *Dizajn tamtych czasów* by Wojciech Grabowski (2017) and others.

All the above-mentioned publications, as well as many others published recently in Poland, show how important the role of design is in the life of contemporary man, how its components, such as colour, material and finally appearance occupy a lot of space in the consciousness and everyday life. Also, last but not least, they show how graphic design is important and influences us subconsciously, involving, first of all, the perception of sight, and since most of the population is comprised of so-called visual persons, it makes even more sense to notice design issues and analyse them.

Therefore, the subject of the article is broadly understood design in the context of selected Polish signboards. This issue will be described in more detail in the book I am preparing, and this article is only the introduction to the aforementioned, more detailed publication.

Consideration of whether to include issues related to design in the circle of broadly understood chrematonymy has been made clear by the above-mentioned trend, already present in contemporary humanities, called "the return to things" (Domańska, 2006). Although this trend can be easily applied in philosophical fields or recently also in literature, I notice the possibility of using it in linguistics. Names represented on various media become objects, therefore, it is justified to include considerations about company names (terminology after Gałkowski, 2015, pp. 35–37), also called *marketing names*, in the design-related issues. The appearance of a medium will determine whether it will be remembered by the consumer, how it will be remembered and what associations it will evoke. This aspect also includes design. The philosophy of turning to objects, focusing on the material, the man-made, illustrates significant areas of the contemporary world and its inhabitants, surrounded by various objects from all over the world. According to the so-called linguistic landscape theory, proper names in urban space, which are of particular interest to me, can show "sociolinguistic situations in a given area by describing linguistic and cultural diversity, reflecting the degree of use of given languages and linking these phenomena to linguistic policy and the sense of linguistic identity" (Góral, 2011, pp. 41–43), and therefore this concept falls within any research in which we deal with urban tissue and various signs, representative for this tissue, related to corresponding media (e.g. signboards, shopfronts, etc.). All this leads to the consideration of the communication aspect of company names.

As Adam Siwiec (2015) points out, "communication serving the purposes of commercial advertising, especially if it is an advertisement that goes outside objects and is displayed on various media in urban space, is based on stimuli and visual impressions and to a large extent has a visual character". Artur Gałkowski,

on the other hand, calls such marketing exponents "visuality" (2015) and refers to them as "associations of the name with the lexical meaning of the appellative, which became the basis, including its stereotypical attributes". Such associations can be found in many names located in urban areas. Contemporary Polish chrematonomy school, therefore, clearly lists the company names under discussion in the form of a separate entity, indicating their permanent relationship with visualization, marketing (cf. marketing name/firmonym), culture, consumerism and finally urban space, which was also highlighted by Siwiec (2015) in his latest works on chrematonymy, in which he mentions, among other things, that the perception of company names in the field is highly important, especially when they appear on signboards and shopfronts.

The research conducted so far, apart from the investigations of the aforementioned Siwiec and Gałkowski, has somewhat overlooked the visual context, which is so important for the aesthetic and marketing function in the contemporary world, because, as Siwiec (2015) notes, "the linguistic message is mixed with the iconic message in the conditions of a broadly understood visual culture, which includes all the figures of pictorial representations created as a result of human activity". The onomastician also notes that "we can photograph [signboards] and analyse the elements of the message captured in a photograph, reading this message in a semiotic and structural mode, for example, using photography as a research method" (2015).

Therefore, when we look at contemporary agglomerations, capitals, cities, central areas, but also often peripheral ones, the ubiquitous names appearing most often on signboards will be its perfect reflection and confirmation of the validity of discussion about the return to things. In the urban tissue, we are dealing, at every step, with the language of things blended into the landscape, therefore, the aforementioned methodology used by the researchers of the Anglo-Saxon cultural and linguistic space, which is the linguistic landscape, cannot be ignored for this kind of research. As Bogumiła Góral (2011, p. 42) notes, "most linguistic signs appear in cities, especially in their parts related to trade and industry" and it is there that we can read the linguistic landscape from signposts, signboards, shopfronts, façades of buildings, business premises, neon signs or various kinds of outdoor advertising.

The term *design context* used by me is in line with the research trend undertaken by Małgorzata Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska (2013). Using the findings of Wacław Šmid (2010), the product-client relationship is considered in several contexts: linguistic, cultural, literary, dialogical and business. For several reasons, it would seem advisable to take into account the design context as well:

I. The design of signboards or labels fits into the complex aspects of the function of objects that are defined by Victor Papanek in his book *Dizajn dla realnego świata* (2012), confronting it with design understood as "planning and shaping the

course of performing any activity with a view to achieving a desired and predict-able goal" (Papanek, 2012). The author stresses that the *need*, *method*, *usability*, the above-mentioned *context*, *associations* and *aesthetics* form the basis for an intuitive effort to show the aesthetic graphic layout. From the perspective of these concepts, it is possible to analyse specific media bearing company proper name.

II. Another, more detailed study of company names in the design context (regardless of the type of medium on which they are presented, i.e. a signboard, shopfront or, in other cases, a label, a secondary label or a clothing label), may be an attempt to use terminology derived from literature, namely the elements that make up a verbal and visual composition created in the 16th century, i.e. an emblem (Pelc, 1973, p. 2002), and use them in an onomastic and design aspect. Namely, concepts such as *lemma*, *imago* or *subscription*, as components of the emblem, linking the image with the text, could become the basis for the methodological assumptions of the design context of selected company names. Let us then take a look at such a solution on a concrete example, excerpted from the urban space of Poznań.

Francuski Łącznik is a firmonym popular among the residents of the capital of the Greater Poland, for many years representing a well-known gastronomic premises at the Sołacki Park and its branches. The place offers tarts to be eaten in

Photo 1

Source: Photo taken by the author.

or as take-aways. When the place was being built, such dishes were not yet very popular in our country. For years, the unchanging signboard, in several forms (over the entrance to the restaurant and over the entrance to the garden), has been attracting new customers and still does so. In this case, the *lemma* is the inscription *FRANCUSKI ŁĄCZNIK* in capitals, the *imago* represents dishes served in a restaurant in a circle around the French phrase *ART DEL A TARTE* ("the art of cake", "the art of tarts"). The *subscription* consists of all additional information and texts that complement the lemma and imago, i.e. the descriptive words *CAFE* and *CUKIERNIA* above the lemma, and *TARTY* and *PASZTETY* below the lemma. Both signboards (cf. Photo 1) are yellow and the letters are green. It is worth noting that other premises under this brand have different signboards, stylistically adapted to the place where they are located. Thus, there is no cohesion in visual identity, but it is in the aesthetics of space, to which more and more attention has been paid in recent years. Thus described, ready-made emblems could appear in the onomastic and design research space.

III. In addition, when reflecting on design, one should not forget and should also refer directly to the so-called 10 principles of good design by Dieter Rams[2], which he developed at the beginning of the 1970s, and which became sort of "commandments", which, even after nearly fifty years, are still valid and capable of being implemented not only in architecture or applied arts, but also in chrematonomastics. These are respectively: innovativeness, usability, aesthetics, comprehensibility of the object, unobtrusiveness of form, social honesty, timelessness, design perfection, environmental friendliness of the object and anti-design. Below, I will briefly describe all of them (Rams, 2014).

Innovation – characterized by a good, innovative design, which has unlimited possibilities for improvement; the design is inexhaustible and develops in parallel with the development of technology, it is never an end in itself. The scope includes emblems that evolve during their existence and often appear simultaneously on various types of media, but on each of them they look good. They blend in with the background or a particular emblem. An example can be the logo of a Poznań multi-brand, SPOT. The name refers to a restaurant, a boutique, a wine shop, a city spa and a hairdressing salon, all signed by a foundation under the same name, and the signboard in front of the premises is made of bricks, plastered, painted with graphite paint, on which a marketing name is inscribed in the form of a logo and additional texts informing about the activity of the place (cf. Photo 2).

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[2] Rams is a German industrial designer, known primarily for his work for Braun (1962–1995) and for establishing the 10 famous design principles. It is obvious that these principles did not meet with full enthusiasm in the design community, but found crowds of admirers and continuators. One of them is Jonathan Paul Ive, Apple's designer and CEO.

Photo 2

Source: Photo taken by the author.

The second element is usability – products are manufactured in order to be used; labels and signboards are used to inform the customer; products are also to meet criteria related to aesthetics and psychological impact; good design only emphasizes important aspects of the product, premises or service and omits anything that may distract attention from them.

The third point in Rams' assumptions is aesthetics – based on classic principles: the appearance of the product is the most important quality next to its function; the aesthetics of signs or labels affect the everyday mood of the recipients; only well-made objects can be beautiful, such as wrought-iron emblems, which fit into the cultural character of old towns (cf. the Old Town in Kraków, the Old Market in Poznań, adapting to the rigid assumptions of the landscape act – cultural parks, etc.).

Then Rams enumerates the comprehensibility – a good graphic design should make the product understandable; it should communicate what the object is and clearly express its functions. It should intuitively indicate what it is used for and how to use it. In the last two decades, when we realized that English is the second language in the world and everyone should use it, marketing names started to be adopted from English to non-English-speaking countries.

The next component is the unobtrusiveness of the form – that is, the assumption that the purpose of the objects should be achieved. After all, they do not serve only for decoration, they are also not works of art, so their design should be natural and restrained. Signboards or labels should, above all, inform, and in many cases, they do. When you take a bottle of wine in your hand, you immediately recognize its colour, and a moment later you can read about its origin. But it is not always that easy. Often the information is missing, concealed, or on the contrary – there is so much information that we lose sight of what object or product we are dealing with.

The same happens in the area of advertising and signboards. Some surprise with simplicity, others with overwhelming information. And so, for example, one of Poznań's signboards says: *Piwnica Jeżyce. Sklep z „czekoladą i oliwą", WINIARNIĄ, a także „TAPAS BAREM"* (Jeżyce Cellar. Shop with "chocolate and olive oil", WINERY, and also "TAPAS BAR") (cf. Photo 3). Such form only confuses the client. After all, there are other places and opportunities to provide any additional information.

Photo 3

Source: Photo taken by the author.

Just as any field, so the marketing industry (although we are well aware of how different advertising techniques manipulate consumers every day) should always be guided by the principle of s o c i a l h o n e s t y. That is another postulate of Rams, according to which, design is to be fair, and should not give the impression that a product seems more innovative or valuable than it actually is. Honest design does not manipulate buyers with fake promises that it cannot fulfil. Imagine two specific signboards: *Cukiernia Sowa* – always two words, a logo and nothing else, on a chocolate background. The name *Sowa* and the logo with the owl's image are nowadays a brand in their own right. However, there are signs which, in the form of a flashy logotype or expression from an axiological point of view, with positive associations, create seemingly valuable places in the city space, but after a closer look at them, one can see that they represent industries often operating on the fringes of the law, such as amusement arcades, nightclubs, psychoactive products sellers, etc. (cf. Photo 4).

All name carriers, as well as other objects, should, according to Rams, be t i m e l e s s. Design, also the iconic one, is to be permanent and should not age or be subject to fashion trends, so it should not be anachronistic, and should prove itself in various circumstances. A perfect example of this point can be the famous neon sign *Kino Wilda*, which for many years decorated the entrances to the cinema at Wierzbięcice street in the Wilda district of Poznań. When in 2006 the institution ceased to exist and then the well-known discount store took its place, the neon

Photo 4

Source: Photo taken by the author.

sign was disassembled. After a few years, in 2014, thanks to the efforts of the SPOT Foundation, a new neon sign inspired by the previous one, was installed, designed by Piotr Heinze, who designed the neon sign of 1962. This story shows how, despite the passage of more than 50 years, design has proven to be almost eternal (Rezmer, 2014).

Rams' next postulate is perfection. The design should be characterized by good design refined to the last detail. Nothing can be left to chance: care and accuracy in design is an expression of respect for the user. At this point, mention can be made about the more and more frequently organized contests such as "Wzorcowy szyld" ("A Model Signboard") (https://www.ulepszpoznan.pl/portfolio/wzorcowy-szyld/). This undertaking, with the Internet user voting system, made a part of our local community aware of the importance of taking care of details. This applies, among others, to the signboard, which is an object that the customer comes into contact with at the very beginning of contact with a shop or company, before entering it from the street. It is one of the most important elements of maintaining a coherent outdoor marketing. There are also local projects like "Szyldownik", thanks to which entrepreneurs operating in Poznań's downtown districts can obtain a brochure from the city related to the design and installation of a perfect signboard in a historic environment (http://www.poznan.pl/mim/rewitalizacja/news,1194/szyldownik-czyli-jak-powinien-wygladac-szyld,117409.html).

The environmental friendliness of the object, as well as its production, is also on the Rams' list and is connected with the fact that good design should be environmentally friendly. It is, therefore, important to take a responsible approach to the manufacture of objects, taking care to preserve natural resources. In the last few years, many signboard creators and manufacturers have succeeded in meeting this requirement without violating the other nine principles of good design.

In Poznań, as well as in the entire country, there has been a recent tendency to construct objects such as catering furniture, from objects made of recyclable materials, such as pallets (this concerns leisure and catering furniture), as well as signboards. Increasingly more places pride themselves on the fact that the signboard representing them has its second life, that it used to be an old wardrobe or a floor in a restaurant. An interesting example is also the indoor signboard of *Taczaka 20* café, with a numeral in the form of a handicraft made of wool (cf. Photo 5).

Photo 5

Source: Photo taken by the author.

Rams' final postulate is the implementation of the famous slogan *Weniger aber besser* (Eng. "less, but better"), meaning *little design in design* or, in one word, anti-design. According to this principle, we should focus on the most important aspects of the project without burdening it with what is unnecessary. Good design turns to minimalism and simplicity. It is sufficient to look at some of the signboards and one already knows if they meet this condition or not. In Poland, but also in other countries, there are still many signboards that fail to meet this criterion, and, thus, fail to implement many other Rams' postulates. Anti-design examples have already appeared in the discussion of earlier points, such as honesty or unobtrusiveness of

form. This section can also include, among others, the Poznań signboard with the text *KEBAB PIQNIK & BURGER*, etc.

The nomenclature so presented and studied in terms of design, collected during urban observations, may be the beginning of new, interdisciplinary onomastic research and allows to show trends and traditions in urban corporate nomenclature all over the world. I hope that this will contribute to further extended research in this area.

Summing up the above, preliminary issues, it seems important that the considerations about marketing names in urban space (although not only, cf. the product names) should be included in the design context. The appearance of a medium will determine whether it will be remembered by the consumer, how it will be remembered and what associations it will evoke.

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the author's conclusions on firmonyms (chrematonyms) located in urban space, drawn partly on the basis of the object-oriented philosophy. The material in the form of photographs of shop signs was collected during the field exploration, mostly in Poznań. The design context of firmonyms is based on relevant communicative functions they fulfil as described in the theory of business communication (see Wacław Šmid). New design context, which, in the author's opinion, should constitute a separate category in research on proper names that blend into our "urban (linguistic) landscape", can be a starting point for conclusions concerning aesthetics, utility or simplicity of form and can underline marketing or linguistic assets as well as problems of onomastic texts. The author also presents another methodological suggestion based on the word-picture composition created in the 16th century, i.e. an emblem. It can be used in the onomastic-design aspect, using literary terms such as *lemma*, *imago* or *subscription* as components of the emblem, connecting the image with the text. The above-presented research problem shall be the scope of further studies in the field of marketing and design in its broad sense, bordering on onomastics.

Keywords: chrematonymy, firmonyms, linguistic landscape, shop signs, designs, object-oriented philosophy

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie kwestii dotyczących nazw firmowych (chrematonimów) umiejscowionych w przestrzeni miejskiej, z wykorzystaniem teorii zwrotu ku rzeczom. Materiał w postaci zdjęć szyldów został zebrany podczas eksploracji terenu, w przeważającej mierze w Poznaniu. Płaszczyzną do umiejscowienia ich w kontekście projektowym jest funkcjonowanie nazw własnych w kontekstach komunikacyjnych zaczerpniętych z teorii komunikacji biznesowej (por. W. Šmid). Nowy kontekst projektowy, który warto według autora wyodrębnić w badaniach związanych z nazwami firmowymi (firmonimy) w „pejzażu miejskim (językowym)", prowadzi nie tylko do wniosków związanych z estetyką, użytkowością czy prostotą formy, ale także uwypukla marketingowe oraz językowe walory i problemy omawianych onimów. Autor ukazuje także jeszcze jedną propozycję metodologiczną, której podstawę stanowi powstała w XVI wieku kompozycja słowno-obrazkowa,

jaką jest emblemat. Wykorzystać ją można w onomastyczno-projektowym aspekcie, stosując literaturoznawcze pojęcia, takie jak *lemma*, *imago* czy *subskrypcja*, jako składowe emblematu, łączące obraz z tekstem. Przedstawione zagadnienie jest jedynie wprowadzeniem do szerszych badań z pogranicza onomastyki, szeroko rozumianego marketingu i dizajnu, których wynik zostanie przedstawiony w formie oddzielnej monografii.

Słowa kluczowe: chrematonimia, firmonimy, pejzaż językowy, szyld, dizajn, teoria zwrotu ku rzeczom