



Menu Naming as a Branding Strategy of Indonesian Restaurants in Kuala Lumpur: a Socio-onomastic Approach

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Abstract

Keywords:

Menu
naming;
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onomastic
approach.

This research aims to identify strategic language components in Indonesian menu items and restaurants as part of a broader branding strategy for Indonesian establishments in Kuala Lumpur. Employing a qualitative approach based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model alongside descriptive methods, the study ensures a thorough and systematic analysis. The primary data comprise menu listings from two selected restaurants, categorized into: (1) Indonesian restaurants offering a diverse range of dishes and (2) Indonesian franchise restaurants featuring a single branded menu. Data were also enriched through direct observation of both establishments. Findings from D'Chowkit Restaurant (R1) reveal that many menu items adopt unique and attention-grabbing names that reference cultural symbols and social conditions, thus associating the food with meanings beyond its culinary function. In contrast, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus (R2) exhibits minimal linguistic variation, relying instead on an already well-established brand image known for its reputation, quality, and prestige in both Indonesia and Malaysia. The brand's recognition alone strongly influences consumer perception. These findings demonstrate that linguistic choices in menu presentation, together with established brand narratives, not only attract consumer interest but also communicate cultural authenticity, create symbolic value, and reinforce Indonesia's culinary identity within an increasingly competitive transnational context.

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:

Nama menu;
Branding;
Pendekatan socio-
onomastika

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi komponen strategis dalam penggunaan bahasa pada nama menu dan penamaan restoran Indonesia sebagai bagian dari strategi branding merek di Kuala Lumpur. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan merujuk pada model interaktif Miles dan Huberman serta metode deskriptif untuk memastikan analisis yang menyeluruh dan sistematis. Data utama diperoleh dari daftar menu dua restoran yang dipilih sebagai subjek penelitian, masing-masing mewakili dua kategori: (1) restoran Indonesia dengan ragam menu yang beragam, dan (2) restoran waralaba Indonesia dengan satu menu utama yang telah menjadi merek dagang. Selain itu, pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi langsung terhadap kedua restoran tersebut. Temuan dari D'Chowkit Restaurant (R1) menunjukkan bahwa

sebagian besar nama menu menggunakan istilah yang unik dan menarik perhatian, dengan rujukan simbolik yang mencerminkan kondisi sosial serta mengaitkan makanan dengan makna di luar aspek kuliner semata. Sementara itu, restoran Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus (R2) menunjukkan branding yang minim melalui bahasa, karena kekuatan merek yang telah dikenal luas dengan reputasi, kualitas, dan prestise tinggi di Indonesia maupun Malaysia. Nama merek tersebut secara signifikan membentuk persepsi konsumen. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pilihan bahasa dalam penamaan menu dan narasi merek berperan penting tidak hanya dalam menarik perhatian konsumen, tetapi juga dalam mengomunikasikan keaslian budaya, membangun nilai simbolik, dan memperkuat identitas kuliner Indonesia di tengah persaingan transnasional yang semakin ketat.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources play a vital role in enhancing a nation's economy. Consequently, if the government prioritizes improving human resource quality, it will positively influence welfare and stimulate economic growth (Prihastuti, 2018). The disparity between reality and ideal expectations prompts population migration from one region to another, particularly from marginalized areas to regions with improved economic conditions and better job opportunities. Additionally, the movement of Indonesian human resources extends beyond domestic borders, encompassing international destinations. Countries that attract Indonesian workers include Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, and others.

Among the countries mentioned, Malaysia has the highest number of immigrants from Indonesia. Several factors make Malaysia an attractive destination for those seeking a livelihood. Notably, there are similarities in culture, language, habits, religion, and strategic geographical proximity. However, artificial similarities related to the regional landscape do not guarantee that immigrants will be welcomed. The bilateral relations between the two countries are not without issues, and historical and geographical similarities do not necessarily lead to smooth interactions (Saw & Kesavapany, 2004). Additional factors affecting the situation include the legality of migrant workers in Malaysia and their impact on the local community's social life.

Indonesian workers in Malaysia comprise educated and uneducated individuals and those with specialized training. In Kuala Lumpur, a significant employment opportunity for these migrant workers is in the culinary or restaurant industries. While migrant workers are not permitted to own restaurants or shops in their names, they can collaborate with Malaysian citizens for ownership. Those with funds can act as

operational managers, while the ownership of the buildings and businesses is registered under Malaysian citizens, with profits shared between them.

Indonesian restaurants and eateries in Kuala Lumpur possess distinctive characteristics that reflect their food identity. Notable examples include Nasi Padang restaurants and establishments offering a variety of Indonesian dishes, such as Javanese An-Nur Restaurant, D'TAR Restaurant, and D'Chowkit Restaurant. There are also popular Indonesian franchises like Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus, Ayam Geprek Benu, and Richeese. These Indonesian restaurants successfully compete with Malaysian eateries, which is evident from the many visitors they attract, particularly during lunch, holidays, and dinner hours. Notably, in mid-2023, one of the Richeese franchises gained significant attention in Kuala Lumpur and continues to draw crowds.

Interest in Indonesian restaurants arises not only from their distinctive flavors and dishes but also from their strategic naming, which functions as a branding tool to appeal to a broad customer base beyond the Indonesian community. Fitriisia et al. (2018) argue that food is not an isolated commodity; it reflects the social background, beliefs, environment, and geographical characteristics of the seller and the location where the food is offered. Language used in branding thus plays a critical role in conveying the essence of these offerings, fostering curiosity and encouraging people to explore them.

Nuari (2020) researched the elements associated with naming halal food menus in Bali. Branding strategies in menu naming can be observed through various approaches, such as sound imitation, acronyms or abbreviations, references to specific parts of the food, the seller's geographical origin, or the seller's name. Furthermore, a culinary linguistics study by Fitriisia (2018) suggested that analyzing the names of culinary dishes from a linguistic perspective can reveal aspects of local wisdom inherent in traditional foods or within particular communities.

Gerhardt (2013) asserts that food and language are essential in maintaining and cultivating human relationships. The dining table serves as a vibrant setting for socialization and language acquisition. How people interact with food helps shape social hierarchies, classes, ethnicities, castes, and the distinctions between the wealthy and the less fortunate. A person's speech and dietary choices are influenced not only by personal preferences but also by the societal context in which they live and the social position they occupy or aspire to attain. In this framework, applied linguistics significantly enhances the economy by improving the perception and appeal of food products. Linguistic anthropology has explored this relationship by focusing on culture

and language use. As a result, researchers are increasingly interested in a detailed analysis of food menu naming as a branding strategy for Indonesian restaurants in Kuala Lumpur from a socio-onomastics perspective.

While previous studies have explored linguistic aspects of food naming—such as Isnaniah et al. (2024) analysis the naming of halal food and beverages, and Subagiyo and Syaichoni (2023) investigation of the potential of halal culinary Tourism Among Non-Muslim Communities in Bali, this research offers a novel contribution by adopting a socio-onomastic approach to examine branding strategies in Indonesian restaurants in Kuala Lumpur. Unlike earlier works that primarily focus on structural or descriptive linguistics, this study emphasizes the social, symbolic, and transnational dimensions of menu naming as a cross-cultural marketing strategy. By situating the analysis within the Indonesian diaspora context in Malaysia, this research highlights how language functions not merely as a label, but as a powerful branding tool that constructs cultural identity and consumer appeal in a multicultural environment. As such, the study moves beyond conventional linguistic frameworks and provides a more holistic interpretation of how menu names contribute to shaping national culinary image in a global setting.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the subject matter. The findings are presented in a descriptive format, providing a detailed and nuanced understanding of the data and insights gathered throughout the study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research aims to explore, understand, and interpret social and environmental phenomena in depth and naturally.

The primary data for this research consists of a list of food menus from two restaurants that serve as the subjects of the study. The restaurants are categorized into two groups: 1) Indonesian restaurants that offer a varied menu and 2) Indonesian franchise restaurants that feature a single branded menu. In addition, the researchers gathered information through direct observation of the two studied restaurants. They employed participatory observation techniques, actively engaging in the observed activities for some time. This approach allowed the researchers to gain insights and collect the necessary information to support their findings (Sugiyono, 2019).

The secondary data for this research consists of information related to restaurant branding, food naming, and literature notes on socio-onomastics, all obtained from

digital sources. Sugiono explains that secondary data serves as a supplementary source that enriches primary data and is considered indirect (2008). The research was conducted in Kuala Lumpur with Padan and Agih techniques (Sudaryanto, 1993). The results were presented in the Miles and Huberman model, which encompasses steps for data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusions.

Num	Qualification	Restaurant Name	Code
1	Indonesian Restaurant with a Varied Cuisine Menu	D'Chowkit Restaurant	R1
2	Indonesian restaurants with one branding menu	Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus Restaurant	R2

Table 1. Restaurant name codes

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data 1

Num	Menu name	Coding
1	Nasi Goreng Ayam	R1.a
2	Set Ayam Bakar Madu	R1.b
3	Tauhu Sumedang	R1.c
4	Set Ayam Penyet	R1.d
5	Gado Gado	R1.e
6	Rojak Buah	R1.f
7	Set Ikan Kembung Bakar	R1.g
8	Set Ayam Kampung Balado	R1.h
9	Set Gulai Kawah Daging	R1.i
10	Set Tomyam Campur	R1.j
11	Set Tempoyak Ikan Patin	R1.k
12	Set Daging Rawon	R1.l
13	Set Ikan Talapia	R1.m
14	Set Nasi Goreng Jaman Now Ayam Geprek	R1.n
15	Set Nasi Goreng Gila Surabaya	R1.o
16	Yee Mee Goreng Kekinian Lock Down	R1.p
17	Set Nasi Goreng Jaman Now Pentol Geprek	R1.q
18	Set Nasi Pentol Penyet	R1.r
19	Set Nasi Bujang Exclusive	R1.s
20	Set Nasi Goreng Udang Terpacak	R1.t
21	Set Nasi Janda Exclusive	R1.u

Table 2. Data Code R1

D'Chowkit Restaurant is an Indonesian eatery at Jalan Chow Kit, Chow Kit, 50350 Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The restaurant operates from 8 AM to 12 PM. The name *D'Chowkit* reflects its Chow Kit location and aims to convey a sense of novelty or a millennial vibe, moving away from traditional notions. In the early 20th century, food began to transcend purely anthropological aspects, expanding into the social domain, including individual lifestyles and consumer behavior. Chaney (2011) argues that lifestyle is a fundamental trait of modernity

across all societal levels. People's actions are closely tied to their lifestyle perspectives, manifesting in their attitudes, habits, relationships, and daily consumption patterns.

The branding of this restaurant conveys a sense of modernity by adding "D" to the beginning of its name. This choice will likely lead potential customers, particularly those who have never visited, to perceive it as a contemporary establishment. This approach aligns with Högström, Gustafsson, and Tronvoll (2015), who noted that branding management differs across agencies and institutions, depending on each company's vision, mission, and desired image. Some companies incorporate symbols that reflect both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Sadat (2009) elaborates on the origins of branding, tracing it back to cattle breeders in America who used specific marks to identify their livestock, thereby streamlining the buying and selling process. This concept is analogous to brand names, recognizable identifiers for potential customers seeking a particular business or restaurant. In this regard, the branding of the D'Chowkit restaurant has gained significant popularity in Kuala Lumpur, especially in comparison to other Indonesian restaurants that adopt more generic names.

A brand represents an identity that affects potential customers, shaping their interest in purchasing a product or service. This idea is closely linked to a brand's persuasive power, which enhances the image of a location, making it more appealing to potential visitors. Additionally, brands signify a product's origin and safeguard consumers and producers from competitors attempting to market similar-looking and more attractive alternatives (Susanto, 2012). The D'Chowkit restaurant brand prominently features symbols that reflect the identity of its location. The name conveys an unconventional impression and signifies where the restaurant is situated. Instead of highlighting the food menu, the name focuses on other aspects specific to the area. The restaurant's menu is displayed in the table below.

Data R1.a, *Nasi Goreng Ayam*, informs consumers that the menu explicitly contains a rice dish with fried chicken as a side dish. This menu presents food as it is. Likewise with data R1.b, *Set Ayam Bakar Madu*. The word *set* symbolizes that the menu contains one portion of rice and one portion of honey-grilled chicken. The word *madu* (honey) symbolizes grilled chicken with sweet spices. In data R1.c *Tauhu Sumedang*. One field of the study of onomastics is toponymy. According to Ullmann (2019), toponymy comes from the Greek word *topos*, which means 'place', and

onoma, which means 'name.' Thus, toponymy is a linguistic study related to place names. R1.c data shows that the *Tauhu Sumedang* menu is typical of Sumedang food. The word *tauhu* is written with an extra "u" instead of *tahu* in Bahasa Indonesia because it is a Malay word. Thus, the dual identity in naming this menu implies that the target consumers are Malays and Indonesian.

Data R1.d, the *Set Ayam Penyet*, indicates explicitly that the menu served is one portion of rice and one portion of *ayam penyet* (smashed chicken). This menu *-ayam penyet-* comes from Java, especially East Java. Then data R1.e, *gado gado*, refers to a menu that contains boiled vegetables mixed with peanut sauce. The name of this food initially from Jakarta. The data shows that the menu offered at this restaurant refers not only to one region in Indonesia but also to superior menus from various regions in Indonesia. Next, the R1.f data is *rojak buah*. The word *rojak* written on this menu is grammatically not an Indonesian word, but Malay. The Indonesian word for *rojak* is *rujak*. This indicates that the consumers who are the target of naming this menu are Malays and Indonesians in Kuala Lumpur. This was also explained by Kapferer (2008), who states that naming a product aims to be a source of influence, a system of interconnected mental associations (brand image) and relationships.

Data R1.f, *Set Ikan Kembung Bakar*, describes the menu as one portion of rice and one portion of grilled mackerel fish. Toponymically, areas that sell a lot of fish and seafood are generally coastal areas. As is known, Malaysia is also an archipelagic country, which indicates that, geographically, Malaysia has many areas where people live on the coast such as Penang, Terengganu, Melaka, Kuala Selangor, etc. Kuala Lumpur is a city center where most of the population is heterogeneous and comes from various regions. For this reason, the grilled mackerel fish menu is a product differentiation that accommodates consumers who tend to consume seafood. This is emphasized by Griffi (2003), that product differentiation is the creation or image of a product that is different from other products to attract consumer interest.

Data R1.g is *set Ayam Kampung Balado*. This menu indicates that the product sold is one portion of chicken meat, precisely the type of free-range chicken cooked with *balado* spices. Data R1.h is *set gulai kawah daging*. This menu comes from Kelantan and was initially known as *Gulai Raja Berangkat*. *Kawah* curry is cooked in a large cauldron and served for wedding parties. However, now, *gulai kawah daging* is not only served for *kenduri* events in the Kelantan region but has spread widely in restaurants and food stalls in Malaysia. Anggraeni (2018) calls this phenomenon a form

of cultural diffusion. It is a process of spreading cultural elements in a society mediated by one group to another group. Apart from that, there has been a shift in the social background in the consumption of this food from what was initially served specifically for kenduri and turned into a daily food menu that can be consumed by anyone anywhere outside the Kelantan area.

Data R1.j, *Set Tomyam Campur*, contains elements of naming assimilation from Thailand. According to Bunmak (2013), the Tom Yam restaurant was first established in Kuala Lumpur in the 1970s by a Thai-speaking Muslim from Hat Yai in Songkhla province, Thailand. To avoid financial problems and improve his family's fortunes, he opened a small family restaurant in Malaysia selling Thai dishes, including Tom Yam soup made by his wife. Armad Restaurant is located near the UMNO building in Kuala Lumpur. Although initially Tomyam was sold by and for Thai people in Kuala Lumpur. However, nowadays, the tomyam menu can be found in almost all restaurants, including Indian, Chinese, Malay, and Indonesian. People who consume tomyam no longer specifically refer to certain social groups. Thus, *D'Chowkit* restaurant maintains and accommodates complete menus to maintain customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction will be achieved if customer needs, desires, and expectations are available and fulfilled through the products consumed (Veloutsou, 2005:46).

Data R1.k is the *Set Tempoyak Ikan Patin*. Pragmatically, this menu combines words from Malay; tempoyak, ikan, and patin. The food served implies one portion of rice and one portion of catfish-type fish. According to Malaysian cultural sites, this dish is popular in the Temerloh area of Pahang. The main ingredient is catfish, which is cooked with durian *tempoyak*. Malaysia is one of the largest durian-producing countries after Thailand. Durian is categorized as a seasonal fruit, and peak production in Malaysia is in June and July. In Malaysia, durian is consumed regularly and processed into various types of food and drinks, including ice cream, moon cake, dumplings, and *tempoyak*. (Safari, 2022). The name of this product is very Malay and targets local consumers.

Data R1.l, *Set Daging Rawon*. This data shows that the menu is one portion of rice and one of beef *rawon* (beef cooked with traditional spices). *Rawon* comes from East Java, more precisely, Ponorogo. However, some say this culinary delight comes from Surabaya. The naming of this food menu indicates that the target consumers are Indonesians who live in Kuala Lumpur or travelers from Indonesia. According to Kartajaya (2009), market segmentation is essential for business success and allows

sellers to be very competitive in determining sales targets. As an Indonesian restaurant or eatery, *D'Chowkit* still carries Indonesian characteristics in its menu to meet the needs of customers from Indonesia and Malaysia who want to try typical Indonesian menus.

Code mixing is used in the R1.n data, *Set Nasi Goreng Jaman Now Ayam Geprek*. This menu perlocutionally means that the food displayed is one portion of fried rice and one portion of fried chicken. The use of terms *jaman now* is an adaptation of the use of slang means *up to date*. Slang language indicates that the majority of its users are the millennial generation and Generation Z. According to (Mulyana, 2000), self-concept is a person's way of viewing themselves, which is influenced by various external information and is attached to that individual. The use of slang is closely related to youth with slang connotations and an up-to-date character. The name of this menu is aimed at young people, who are target consumers.

R1.o data is the *Set Nasi Goreng Gila Surabaya*. The name of this menu means one portion of fried rice with side dishes placed on top of the rice. This side dish is prepared from several ingredients: eggs, sausage, vegetables, and spices. The use of the word *gila* means *crazy* on this menu started from consumer comments when this menu first went viral on social media. The word *crazy* has hyperbolic emotive elements. Moeliono (1984) believes that hyperbole is an exaggeration of what actually happened in terms of the number, size, and nature of something. In addition, according to Keraf (1981), hyperbole is a language style that exaggerates something to make an impression on other people. Thus, using the word *crazy* tells potential consumers that the fried rice on the menu is unusual or exceptional. Adding the word Surabaya indicates that fried rice is one of the foods in demand or available in Surabaya.

R1.p data is *Yee Mee Goreng Kekinian Lock Down*. This data indicates that the food on the menu is fried noodles. Using names on this menu grammatically contains code mixing consisting of Mandarin, Indonesian, and English.

Num	Word	Origin
1	Yee Mee	Mandarin
2	Goreng	Bahasa Indonesia
3	Kekinian	Bahasa Indonesia
4	Lock down	English

Table 3. Word Origin

Yee Mee is a typical Chinese cuisine in Malaysia. According to Anwar (2019), the Chinese in Malaysia are the second largest after the Malays, called Bumiputras. According to Lundell (2019), Chinese in Malaysia are a large group in Malaysian society

and are not a minority. Within this group, ethnic Chinese come from various social, linguistic, religious, and educational backgrounds. The naming of the word contemporary gives an emotive impression that the dish is prepared in a new way. The word lockdown refers to the conditions during which Covid-19 occurred, and Malaysia experienced lockdown several times in the past two years. The naming of this food not only represents the particular ethnic community that is the target of sales but also carries a contemporary theme. This indicates that the consumers targeted by the *D'Chowkit* restaurant accommodate the needs of several ethnicities of all ages regardless of their social class and background.

R1.q data is the *Nasi Goreng Jaman Now Pentol Geprek*. In this menu, there is a mixture of Indonesian and English codes. The meaning of this menu is one portion of fried rice and one portion of *pentol* (a meatball), accompanied by chili sauce. *Pentol* is a typical Indonesian food that is generally served with meatballs. The word *jaman* is a non-standard form of the word *era*. The phrase *jaman now* today is slang, which means *up to date*. In the R1.r data, the set nasi pentol penyet indicates one portion of rice and one portion of *pentol* served with chili sauce.

The R1.s data presents the *Nasi Bujang Exclusive* dish, in which "exclusive" serves a specific purpose. "Nasi bujang" is a culinary term commonly associated with single or unmarried Malaysian college students, thereby encapsulating a prevalent gender stereotype. According to Lavenia (2022), gender stereotypes permeate daily life, influencing aspects such as attire, musical preferences, and food choices. Numerous stereotypes related to gender and food exist, including those reflected in menu nomenclature. The *Nasi Bujang Exclusive* comprises a straightforward dish featuring a serving of rice accompanied by an omelet. The inclusion of the term "exclusive" implies that this dish provides additional components that enhance its appeal, such as seafood fried with the omelet along with a variety of vegetables.

The R1.t data pertains to the Set Nasi Goreng Udang Terpacak, which consists of a serving of fried rice intermixed with various prawns. This dish first gained viral popularity in Serdang, an area in Selangor, Malaysia. Its consumer base includes Malaysian citizens from diverse backgrounds. Fischler (1988) posits that food reflects a group's identity through its flavors and preparation. The consumption practices within a particular society underscore its diversity, hierarchy, and organizational structure.

Furthermore, food is instrumental in shaping individual identity, as humans are biologically, psychologically, and socially defined by their food choices. This menu

caters explicitly to individuals with a sophisticated palate. Additionally, Fischler asserts that the socio-cultural framework influencing culinary selections has undergone significant transformation in response to evolving economic conditions and shifting lifestyle patterns.

R1.u data is the *Set Nasi Janda Exclusive*. Almost the same as R1.s data, R1.u data contains elements of gender stereotypes. Zarate and Smith (1990) stated that gender stereotypes are expectations, requirements, and general views about the behavior, personality, and behavior of men and women. This menu contains a set of rice with chicken, soup, and chili sauce. The word *exclusive* indicates additional side dishes or vegetables on the menu. The widespread use of the word *janda* (widow) in this type of food has given rise to specific sensational interpretations. News in Sinar Harian from Media Astro Awani contains news about using widow names. Initially, this word was applied by buyers to a beautiful widow who was a seller of nasi lemak on the side of the road in early 2023. The widow label gave a bad stigma in the seller's view, but behind that, her sales turnover increased from 200 packs per day to thousands of packs of nasi lemak. Over time, this attribute increasingly developed into a stereotype attached to other widows who sold food, so its use became increasingly widespread in the names of food menus.

The menu names in R1.u data prove that D'Chowkit restaurants tend to follow trends in Kuala Lumpur. At the *D'Chowkit restaurant*, this menu has nothing to do with widows because most restaurant servers are men, and some women are over 50 years old.

DATA 2

AYAM GEPUK PAK GEMBUS

Num	Menu Name	Coding
1	Tak Kisah	R2.a
2	Combo tak kisah	R2.b
3	Mana-mana je	R2.c
4	Combo Mana-mana je	R2.d
5	5 pcs Sate ayam Jogja	R2.e

Table 4. Data Table R2

The founder and owner of Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus is Rido Nurul Adityawarman. He started his career by starting a business from a roadside in West Jakarta in 2013. Currently, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus is developing not only on the national stage but also on the global stage. Rido expanded his business to reach 8 thousand employees

and has operated dozens of branches throughout Malaysia. This local Indonesian brand survived the pandemic and plans to open more franchises in Brunei, the Philippines, New Zealand, and America (Sazili: 2023).

In 2021, the owner of the Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus brand had 700 branches in Indonesia and Malaysia. The presentation of Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus is efficient because it is fast and in line with consumer expectations. Apart from that, the quality of cooked chicken meat must also meet standards to maintain the quality of the product served (Pramesti, 2021). Through the restaurant's name, the public can identify that the food being sold is fried chicken with chili sauce. The unique thing in the Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus business strategy lies in the differentiation of chili sauce. The types of chili sauce chosen according to the level of spiciness include peanut sauce, regular chili sauce, hot chili sauce, and extra spicy.

The marketing strategy employed by Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus stands out distinctly in the competitive restaurant landscape. As a franchise business committed to high standards, it is essential for this restaurant not only to achieve customer satisfaction but also to integrate effectively into the social fabric of Kuala Lumpur. According to Kennedy and Soemanagara (2009), effective marketing communications for a product utilize specific techniques designed to persuasively inform potential customers about the benefits and value of the offering. This strategic approach aims to enhance the company's profitability by capturing the interest of consumers and encouraging them to make a purchase. Understanding the cultural dynamics and preferences of the local community is crucial in tailoring these communications, thereby fostering a deeper connection with the target audience and ensuring sustained success.

In Kuala Lumpur, there are several branches of Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus, which researchers visited for surveys several times over the weekend, including Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus Jalan Bangsar, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus Jalan Ampang, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus Melawati, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus. All restaurants are always busy at lunchtime, and consumers even have to stand in line and wait for other customers to finish eating to get a seat. The Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus brand does not have background-like characteristics. The phrase ayam gepuk explicitly symbolizes the product being sold, namely pounded or pressed chicken, while Pak Gembus is the owner's nickname, Ridho Nurul Adityawan. From several places the researchers visited, most consumers were from the under 50 years of age group, millennials, and Gen Z.

Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus is a prominent local Indonesian restaurant brand that has not only endured but also thrived in the competitive landscape of international culinary offerings. An analysis of the nomenclature associated with its menu items reveals intriguing insights into the cultural and gastronomical significance of the dishes served at this establishment. The discussion regarding the menu names at this restaurant is as follows.

Data R2.a is "Tak Kisah". The name of this menu is a Malay word with the lexical meaning "It is OK." This menu includes one portion of rice, fried chicken, fried cabbage, chili sauce, tofu, and *tempe*. Data R2.b is a Combo "Tak Kisah". The name of this menu begins with a combo, which indicates that this menu is equipped with drinks and that the contents are the same as data R2.a. Data R2.c "Mana-mana je" is a word from the Malay language that lexically means whichever. This menu contains the same contents as Data R2.a, but additional gizzards and fried chicken livers exist. The R2.d Combo "Mana-mana je" data is similar to the R2.c data, but an additional drink package exists. Data R2.e, namely five pieces of Jogja chicken satay, indicates that this menu consists of five skewers of typical Jogja chicken satay. The menu variations are not so visible from the main menu but rather in the level of spiciness of the chili sauce.

The analysis of menu naming practices at D'Chowkit Restaurant reveals that names function not only as identifiers of food items but also as socio-cultural signifiers that encode identity, consumer orientation, and branding strategy. Viewed through a socio-onomastic lens, these naming practices demonstrate how linguistic elements are embedded within broader social contexts and cultural discourses, transforming food naming into an act of symbolic communication.

Toponymic references, such as *Tauhu Sumedang*, *Set Daging Rawon*, and *Nasi Goreng Gila Surabaya*, reflect an intentional invocation of geographic identity that signals authenticity and evokes cultural nostalgia. These references enable the restaurant to reinforce its Indonesian origin while simultaneously appealing to a diasporic audience in Kuala Lumpur. This corresponds with Ullmann's (2019) view that place names carry connotative value beyond their literal reference, functioning as cultural markers that influence perception and memory.

Additionally, several menu items incorporate Malay lexical items such as *rojak*, *tempoyak*, and *madu*, suggesting a linguistic adaptation to the sociolinguistic environment of Malaysia. This naming strategy reflects the intersection of cultural localization and market pragmatism, wherein linguistic choices are tailored to enhance

accessibility and resonance among local consumers. Such practices exemplify what Kapferer (2008) refers to as the brand's role in shaping mental associations and relational meaning through language.

The use of contemporary slang and code-mixing in menu items like *Nasi Goreng Jaman Now*, *Ayam Geprek* and *Yee Mee Goreng Kekinian Lock Down* illustrates branding efforts aimed at youth-oriented market segments, particularly millennials and Gen Z consumers. The linguistic innovation observed here aligns with Mulyana's (2000) theory of self-concept formation, in which language is both reflective and constitutive of social identity. The presence of slang functions perlocutionarily, establishing relevance and sociocultural alignment with a digitally connected generation.

Moreover, hyperbolic expressions such as *gila* (crazy) in *Nasi Goreng Gila Surabaya* serve an emotive branding function. As noted by Keraf (1981) and Moeliono (1984), hyperbole amplifies rhetorical effect and enhances memorability. In the context of menu naming, such expressions contribute to creating a distinctive brand personality and stimulate curiosity, thereby enhancing the perceived uniqueness of the dish.

The inclusion of hybridized culinary items such as *Set Tomyam Campur* and *Set Gulai Kawah Daging* reflects processes of cultural diffusion (Anggraeni, 2018) and culinary globalization. These items transcend ethnic and national boundaries, demonstrating how culinary identity is negotiated in transnational urban settings. The adoption and adaptation of such names suggest an intentional strategy to integrate cultural diversity into branding, which supports Griffi's (2003) assertion that product differentiation plays a key role in capturing consumer interest within competitive markets.

Overall, the findings underscore that menu naming in D'Chowkit Restaurant is not a neutral or arbitrary process. Rather, it constitutes a deliberate act of socio-linguistic positioning, wherein language is mobilized to construct brand identity, engage target consumers, and mediate cultural meaning within a multicultural and transnational context. This confirms the socio-onomastic premise that names are socially motivated, ideologically charged, and instrumental in the semiotic economy of branding.

The socio-onomastic analysis of menu naming practices at Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus reveals a distinct orientation in branding discourse that contrasts with the symbolic diversity observed in other Indonesian restaurants. As a franchise-based culinary enterprise with a strong and recognizable brand identity, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus capitalizes on name consistency and the authority embedded in its brand

structure. The term *ayam gepuk* denotes a specific culinary technique—smashed fried chicken served with sambal—while *Pak Gembus* refers directly to the nickname of its founder, Rido Nurul Adityawarman. This combination of product descriptor and persona-based naming constructs an identity that is both functional and personalized, enabling the brand to communicate authenticity, simplicity, and reliability (Pramesti, 2021; Sazili, 2023).

In contrast to referentially explicit menu names that describe food content in detail, the items *Tak Kisah*, *Mana-mana je*, and their respective combos employ informal Malay expressions that are semantically open-ended. While lacking in concrete referential information, these names function indexically by engaging with local sociolinguistic codes and reflecting cultural attitudes toward flexibility, informality, and shared social understanding. From a socio-onomastic standpoint, these naming strategies illustrate a shift from denotative clarity toward pragmatic resonance—positioning language not as a tool for item specification but as a medium of social interaction. This is aligned with Kennedy and Soemanagara's (2009) assertion that persuasive marketing communication operates not only to inform but to elicit affective and associative responses in target audiences.

Furthermore, the inclusion of *Sate Ayam Jogja* within the otherwise casual and non-referential menu repertoire introduces a subtle toponymic marker. The mention of *Jogja* (Yogyakarta) functions as a regional signifier that lends cultural specificity and appeals to consumer perceptions of authenticity, albeit in a limited and isolated manner. Unlike the D'Chowkit Restaurant, which strategically incorporates toponymic diversity and symbolic cultural capital across its menu items, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus prioritizes branding uniformity, affective engagement, and ease of recall.

Sociolinguistic observation during fieldwork at various outlets across Kuala Lumpur confirms that the majority of customers are from younger demographic groups (millennials and Gen Z) whose linguistic preferences often lean toward casual, playful, and relatable forms. The brand's ability to adopt socially embedded language practices that resonate with this generational segment suggests a targeted socio-pragmatic strategy, wherein menu names act as linguistic extensions of the brand's cultural positioning. Rather than diversifying through regional or symbolic identity markers, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus constructs cohesion through linguistic minimalism, semantic openness, and sociocultural immediacy.

Ultimately, the naming practices employed by Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus underscore the instrumental role of language in brand stabilization and translocal adaptability. While the brand eschews symbolic and regional variation in favor of uniform identity construction, its engagement with colloquial expressions and affectively neutral terms reflects a deliberate linguistic economy that aligns with its mass-market orientation and franchise scalability. From a socio-onomastic perspective, such naming practices exemplify the use of names as socially situated acts, anchored not only in meaning, but in market behavior, cultural adaptation, and consumer psychology.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that menu naming in Indonesian restaurants in Kuala Lumpur functions as a strategic linguistic practice shaped by socio-cultural context, consumer orientation, and brand identity. At D'Chowkit Restaurant, naming strategies are characterized by symbolic richness, toponymic diversity, and cultural hybridity, reflecting an effort to represent Indonesia's regional culinary heritage and appeal to a multicultural audience. In contrast, Ayam Gepuk Pak Gembus adopts a branding approach centered on linguistic minimalism, pragmatic clarity, and affective familiarity—reinforcing its franchise identity through consistent naming and colloquial expressions that resonate with urban youth. Through a socio-onomastic lens, both cases demonstrate that names are not merely labels but socially embedded signifiers that construct meaning, mediate identity, and influence consumer engagement. The findings underscore the pivotal role of language in culinary branding, showing how menu naming operates at the intersection of marketing, culture, and social semiotics in transnational foodscapes.

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