

Naming Water Filtration Plants in Jordan: A Thematic Analysis

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Abstract

This study is a thematic analysis of the naming practices of water filtration plants in Jordan. The corpus of the data consists of 382 water plants' names obtained from the Chamber of Commerce in Irbid, Jordan. Each plant's name in Irbid city is individually analysed and thematically tagged in an excel sheet. The tags for each water plant name are counted. and percentages are extracted. The findings of the study show the following descending order of the major themes: names (48%), religion (17%), quality (16%), wit (4%), patriotism (4%), source (4%), history (3%), technology (3%), drinkware (1%), and romance (1%). The first three themes are the most prominent as they comprise 81% of the data. The three prominent themes have been interpreted in terms of the nature of the Jordanian society. Finally, it is evident that Jordanian filtration water plants' owners use naming strategies to attract potential customers, mainly via including some familial, tribal, religious and quality symbolism in the names of their plants together with some other minor types of symbolism. Indeed, culture plays a crucial role in different aspects of life in Jordan, including naming practices.

Keywords: Naming, Water Filtration Plants, Jordan, Themes, Motives, Culture

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تسمية محطات فلتر المياه في الأردن: تحليل موضوعي

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ملخص

تعد هذه الدراسة تحليلاً موضوعياً لممارسات تسمية محطات فلتر المياه في الأردن. وتتكون عينة الدراسة من 382 اسم لمحطات فلتر المياه حيث تم الحصول عليها من غرفة التجارة في إربد في الأردن. وقد تم تحليل اسم كل محطة فلتر في مدينة إربد على حدة ووضع علامات موضوعية على ورقة إكسل من أجل إحصائها واستخراج النسب المئوية. تظهر النتائج الترتيب التالي للمواضيع الرئيسية: الأسماء (48%) والدين (17%) والجودة (16%) والذكاء (4%) والوطنية (4%) والمصدر (4%) والتاريخ (3%) والتكنولوجيا (3%) وأدوات الشرب (1%) والرومانسية (1%). وتعتبر المواضيع الثلاثة الأولى الأبرز لأنها تشكل ما نسبته 81% من البيانات حيث تم تفسيرها فيما يتعلق بطبيعة المجتمع الأردني. وأخيراً، من الواضح أن مالكي محطات فلتر المياه الأردنيين يحاولون جذب العملاء المحتملين بشكل رئيسي من خلال تضمين بعض الرموز العائلية والقبلية والدينية في أسماء محطاتهم جنباً إلى جنب مع بعض الأنواع الثانوية الأخرى من الرمزية. الكلمات الدالة: تسمية، محطات فلتر المياه، الأردن، مواضيع، دوافع، ثقافة

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Introduction:

Jordan is one of the poorest countries in freshwater resources (Malkawi, 2005). The quality of tap water has changed drastically over the last few decades. Most Jordanians no longer drink from tap water, especially after the 1998 water pollution outbreak in Amman. Instead, city dwellers get their potable water from one of the following sources: home-filtered units, filtered water in private plants, and bottled water either locally produced or imported. Village dwellers, on the other hand, have extra potable water resources, such as wells and springs. Unfortunately, climate change has negatively influenced those resources. In addition, the geo-political events in the Middle East have resulted in having millions of people coming to Jordan seeking refuge, like Iraqis after the First (1990-1991) and Second (2003) Gulf Wars, Libyans after the Libyan Civil War (2011), Yemenis after the Yemini Revolution (2011), and Syrians after the Syrian Crisis (2011) (cf. Sayaaheen & Malkawi, 2019). Consequently, the demand for drinking water has dramatically increased. The number of private plants selling potable water has recently increased that almost every neighbourhood has one or two in cities and villages. Naming this vast number of water plants is informed by cultural considerations, including social, ideological and religious motifs. The researchers have observed that those names might be classified into various patterns and themes governed by the afore-mentioned motifs. For instance, names such as al-Furāt ‘Euphrates’, zamzam ‘Zamzam Spring in Mecca’, and salsabiil ‘A Spring in Heaven’ refer to water sources attached to Islam and the holy Quran. The current study is a thematic analysis of the names of water plants in the governorate of Irbid in Jordan.

Literature Review:

Naming practices have received the interest of researchers in various disciplines. However, in the Arab world, little attention has been given to this topic in terms of its relationship to culture (see Darwish, 2010). El-Yasin and Mahadin (1996) focus on foreignism in a sample of 355 Jordanian shop signs (names) collected from the city of Irbid. The analysis of the linguistic material of their corpus shows that the main function of the foreign elements in the shop signs in question is promotion. They argue that foreign shop signs indirectly inform the potential buyers of an assumed high quality often associated with foreign products.

In relation to translation studies, Al-Kharabsheh, Al-Azzam, and Obeidat (2008) examine the ways in which Jordanian shop signs are

translated from Arabic into English. A sample of 165 translated shop signs collected from various locations in Jordan have been classified and categorised in terms of translation problems. The findings highlight a number of linguistic (orthography, word-order, diction and reduction) and extralinguistic (social and cultural) problems.

Naming has special significance to people as names are expected to last and express identity. Fox (2011) argues that the names of companies are similar to personal names in that they stand for affiliation, reputation, and identity. As most studies on business naming fall within the framework of organizational studies, Fox calls for a new sociolinguistic perspective from which company naming research can benefit. The sociolinguistic perspective involves using sociolinguistic theories to view company names as socially conditioned, as communicating indirect information and as a product and a generator of the social identities of communicators. Sociolinguistics is argued to help organizational scholars view the practices of company naming as interacting with society, cognition, and social knowledge.

Kayaoglu & Köroglu (2013) explore how culture and cultural interaction affect naming choices of people, animals and places. The authors collected people, place, and animal names from three Turkish villages to see the extent to which their naming choices are influenced by relationships with different nations. The findings show that the most frequently borrowed words in Turkish are from Arabic followed by Persian. Kayaoglu and Köroglu (2013) attribute this result to the fact that Arabs and Turks embrace the same religion.

Hasan, Yoke and Jangga (2015) investigate the sociolinguistic factors that influence small and medium enterprises owners' choices of business company names in Malaysia. Choosing the right name for a company is of importance as it may influence the customers' choices of products. Those researchers argue that business in Malaysia, as other countries of the world, has witnessed the supremacy of English, which may impose socio-cultural threat to business naming practices. Small and medium enterprises in Malaysia tend to use English words in their business naming, which, as they argue, give the impression that their country is still shadowed by the British authority. Business names are very important in any business as customers are usually attracted to shops based on the signboards that are placed in front of them. The choice of the brand name should be considered at earlier stages of business as brand names have two functions: they convey the

products' information for the potential customers, and they advertise the products. Those researchers selected 30 small and medium enterprises to participate in a survey and in an interview. Their results show that there are a variety of factors that contribute to business naming. Family influence of business owners and the multicultural and multilingual background of the country are shown to be the main factors that affect their choices.

Alnsour (2018) uses a qualitative methodology that involves in-depth interviews to investigate the new trends in local business names in Jordan and the factors that contribute to the success of a company name. Unstructured interviews were conducted with experts from different sectors and industries in Amman to shed light on the shifts that took place in local businesses branding in Jordan. The experts were asked about the reasons behind their selection of the brand names and whether the names they selected were believed to be competitive and why. They were also asked if the names they selected have received any attention or concern from the customers. The analysis of the interviewees' responses showed that the attractiveness of funny and strange brand names were a main reason behind their selection. Alnsour summarizes the main trends in business names as follows: foreign (non-Arabic) names, names of places, historical figures, phrase-names, phrases including the word 'Jordan', phrases including the word *bait* 'house or home'; animals; colours & nature; and unusual, creative, and unique phrases. Alnsour concludes that Jordanian brand owners do not follow any scientific methods when selecting names; the selection is rather based on personal preferences. In addition, family and friends are shown to be involved in the process of name selection.

The Locale:

Jordan, officially the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is a relatively small country in the Southwest of Asia. It is bordered by Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, Saudi Arabia to the south and southeast, and Palestine/Israel to the west. It is named after the sacred River Jordan (also the Jordan River), the location for the baptism of Jesus. It is an Arab country where the official language is Arabic and the official religion is Islam. Christians comprise 6% of the total population (Bin Talal, 1995). It is a peaceful modern country with limited natural resources. Irbid, where the corpus of the data is taken from, is the second largest city in terms of population density, situated in northern Jordan. Administratively, Irbid is a governorate whose capital is the city of Irbid. which is surrounded by a large number of villages. The water filtration plants under investigation in this study are those situated in the city of Irbid and the surrounding villages.

Aims, Methods and Procedures:

This study aims to explore the thematic content of the names of water filtration plants ‘shops’ in the Governorate of Irbid in the north of Jordan. The general approach used in this study is thematic analysis, which can be defined as a “method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). The choice of this method stems from the fact that “thematic analysis is a flexible method that allows the researcher to focus on the data in numerous different ways” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Specifically, this study tries to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the major themes of water filtration plants’ names in Jordan?, 2) What are the most frequent themes of Jordanian water filtration plants?., and 3) Are there any relationships between the names of the owners and the names of the filtered water plants?

For the purpose of thematically classifying the names of water filtration plants in Irbid, the researchers compiled a corpus of all registered shops. The corpus consists of 382 names of water filtration plants obtained from the Chamber of Commerce in Irbid, Jordan. Each plant name in Irbid city was individually analyzed and thematically tagged in an excel sheet. The tagging was conducted by all researchers in order to ensure objectivity as some themes inextricably intertwined with others. It was agreed that when a name intrinsically had more than one theme, only the most prevalent theme is counted. The tags for each water plant name were counted and percentages were extracted. Moreover, the names for the owners (obtained from the Chamber of Commerce in Irbid) were compared to the names of the water filtration plants.

Findings

The findings of the thematic analysis of the water filtration plants’ names in Irbid, in the northern part of Jordan, are displayed in Table 1.

Table (1) Frequency and Percentages of Themes

No.	Theme	Tokens	Percentage
1.	Names	182	48%

2.	Religion	64	17%
3.	Quality	60	16%
4.	Wit	16	4%
5.	Patriotism	14	4%
6.	Source	16	4%
7.	History	10	3%
8.	Technology	10	3%
9.	Drinkware	5	1%
10.	Romance	5	1%
Total		382	100%

Table (1) shows the number of tokens and the percentages of each theme in our corpus of the names of water filtration plants in Irbid. Each theme will be discussed in detail with transliterated and translated examples (transliterations are italicised while translations are written between single quotation marks). Table 1 reveals that the names of water filtration plants in Irbid fall under ten general themes: Name, Religion, Quality, Wit, Patriotism, Source, History, Technology, Drinkware, and Romance. The themes in Table 1 that arose from the data analysis of the corpus will be discussed, illustrated, and interpreted with reference to Jordanian society:

Names:

The most frequent theme in the corpus is names as it comprises a staggering 48% (182 tokens) of the overall occurring themes in the corpus. This is partially in line with previous research that hinted to the influence of family and friends in naming shops, corporates, businesses, etc. (see Hasan, Yoke & Jangga, 2015; Alnsour, 2018). It seems that the owners of water filtration plants in Jordan prefer to use either their first names, family names, *Kunya* 'Teknonym', or even place names as tags for their businesses. A more in-depth analysis of the data obtained from the Chamber of Commerce in Irbid reveals the following frequency of the different types of names used. Table (2) displays four types of names with their frequency and percentages of usage.

Table (2) Frequency and percentages of name types in the entire corpus

No.	Type of name	Tokens	Percentage
	First names	80	21%
	Place names	61	16%
	Family names	36	9%
	Kunya 'Teknonym'	5	1%
Total		182	48%

The results in Table (2) show that first names are the most frequently used type (21%). A further meticulous analysis of the names of the owners in the corpus reveals that 46 of those first names used to tag the water filtration plants are indeed the first names of the owners. In addition, 3 of those names are the names of the fathers of the owners. The remaining 31 first names in the corpus could not be traced directly to the owners' names, as the corpus does not provide sufficient information in this regard. However, they could be the names of their children or siblings. As for the family names used to tag the businesses, 100% of them refer to the family names of the owners. In the Arab world, a *kunya* 'tekononym' consists of a prefix *abu-* 'father of' or *umm-* 'mother of' followed by the name of the eldest child (Suleiman, 2011). In the current corpus, only 5 of the names are teknonyms, all of which start with *abu-* followed by a first name (4 first male names and 1 first female name). Finally, place names are the second most frequently used type of names in the corpus (16%), and they refer to names of cities, towns, villages, and neighbourhoods either in the city of Irbid or outside. Naming a business after the place name in which it is situated in undoubtedly attracts the customers living nearby as they feel affiliated with the water filtration plant.

Religion:

There is no doubt that "religion is a key element of culture, influencing both behaviour and purchasing decisions" (Essoo & Dibb, 2010). Many businesses try to use religion to attract customers, especially in religious societies. In fact, "the use of religious symbolism in advertising is

increasingly ubiquitous, and has extended beyond the promotion of religiously-associated products to products in general” (Kalliny, Ghanem, Shaner, Boyle & Mueller, 2019). It is no surprise, therefore, that ‘religion’ is the second most frequently used theme in naming water filtration plants in Irbid (17%). The religious names in the corpus include names or qualities of God (e.g. *muṣīn* ‘helper’), names of prophets (e.g. *Mustafa* ‘one of the names of Prophet Muhammad’), names of Prophet Muhammad’s companions (e.g. *qaṣqāṣ* ‘one of Prophet Muhammad’s companions’), holy places (e.g. *jabal ʿarafa* ‘Mount Arafat’), holy months (e.g. *ramadān* ‘the month of Ramadan’), Islamic concepts (e.g. *šūra* ‘consultation’), Islamic deeds (e.g. *Bir al-Wālidayn* ‘Respect and kindness towards parents’), Islamic qualities (e.g. *tasāsmuḥ* ‘forgiveness’) and words from the holy Quran (e.g. *yašfīn* ‘it is He Who cures me’).

Quality:

The very basic idea behind selling filtered water in Jordan is that customers believe that the quality of the water sold in these plants is better than tap water. Some owners of water plants base on this assumption when naming their plants in order to assure the customers that the water they sell is of high quality. Such names in the corpus include *sabʿ injūm* ‘seven stars’, *iksīr* ‘elixir’, *šayx al-kār* ‘old hand’, *al-māsa* ‘the diamond’, *al-jadīr* ‘the worthy’, and *al-šaxšiyyāt* ‘VIPs’. Unquestionably, not only owners of water filtration plants try to link the names of their shops with high quality, but shop owners of all kinds. Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, and Borin, (1998, p. 335) believe that “the store’s name is an information-rich cue to its image. Mention of the store’s name thus evokes a vivid store image in consumers’ minds”. To illustrate, a store name like Nordstorm “evokes an image of a luxurious store environment, high levels of customer service and high quality merchandise” (Grewal, et al., p. 332). Thus, it is not surprising that ‘quality’ is the second most frequently used theme in naming water filtration plants in Irbid (17%).

Wit:

Some owners try to attract the attention of potential customers by choosing witty names for their shops. The clever play of words often triggers positive feelings and helps customers remember the names of shops. The use of adjectives, such as *damʿān* ‘thirsty’ and *xityār* ‘very old’ to name water filtration plants is witty and effective. One of the plants is called *al-*

sanāfir ‘the smurfs’ after the famous animated comedy-fantasy children’s series. In Arabic the word *ṣuyūn* is the plural of *ṣayn*, which has multiple meanings. Principally, it means ‘an eye’, but it also means ‘a spring’, ‘a spy’, ‘a member of the upper parliament’, ‘a tribe chief’, among other less popular meanings. We noticed a tendency to wittily use the singular or plural forms as the first component of water plants compound names, such as *ṣayn sirīn* and *ṣuyūn līn*. The pun in such names creates a humorous effect in the memory of the reader and makes the names stick in the memory. The frequency of the ‘witty theme’ in the corpus is 4%.

Patriotism:

Water plants’ names expressing feelings of patriotism towards Jordan comprise 4% of the total names in the corpus. Such names express love of the country, loyalty towards the king and allegiance to the tribe. Examples of water plants’ names on the theme of patriotism include *ibn al-bald* ‘the son of the country/city/village’, *qalb al-urdun* ‘the heart of Jordan’, *šmāy* ‘shemagh’ and *kūfiyye* ‘kaffieh’. The last two names refer to a traditional red-and-white headdress worn by Jordanians to symbolise their loyalty and belonging to the country and its heritage. Previous research shows that Jordanians often use this theme in various public domains, such as graffiti, car inscriptions, and shop signs (see Al Rousan, 2005; Darwish & Al Rousan, 2019). As in most societies in the world, the theme of patriotism sells and is often used as a marketing strategy, as in shop signs and products. Sometimes patriotism related discounts are advertised, especially during such public holidays as Army Day, Soldier Day, Martyre Day, etc. (see Seiler, 2002).

Source:

As mentioned earlier, the whole purpose of establishing water filtration plants is to make available potable water of the highest quality as Jordanians believe that tap water is not drinkable. We have discussed above some names centring on the theme of quality. A much related theme is the ‘source’. Water plant owners sometimes name their plants after some water sources that are known for their high quality, such as *maxzūn al-ḡayḡ* ‘rain reservoir’, *hazīm* ‘thunder’, *zaxxāt* ‘showers’, *ṣēš rummān* ‘a name of a spring’. This theme accounts for 4% of the data.

History:

Some water filtration plants are named after famous persons or battles that left marks in history, such as *balqīs* ‘Queen Balqīs’, *ṣalāḥ al-dīn al-ayyūbi* ‘Saladin’, *yarmūk* ‘Yarmouk Battle’ and *ḏī qār* ‘The Battle of Dhi Qar’. Conradie (2013, p. 176) argues that advertisers occasionally use the ‘history’ theme in naming a business or a product in an attempt to “establish and/or reinforce its association with a historical event, object, or figure, by means of intertextuality”. Conradie (2013, p. 172) illustrates how the “historic significance of figures such as Malcolm X, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Barack Obama” are often manipulated in marketing strategies. In our corpus, only 3% of water plants names take advantage of historical events.

Technology:

Also related to the quality theme, some names of water filtration plants have the word ‘technology’ to show that they have the best filtering technologies that ensure high quality filtered water. Such names include *nibtun li-tiknulōjya al-miyāh* ‘Neptune for water technology’, *orānus li-tiknulōjya al-miyāh* ‘Uranus for water technology’ and *al-muxaḍram litiknulōjya al-miyāh* ‘the veteran for water technology’. Schatzberg (2006, p. 486) argues that the concept of ‘technology’ has evolved through history to now include various issues that in the past were referred to as “useful arts, manufacturing, industry, invention, applied science, and the machine”. Including the word ‘technology’ in names of businesses influences the reader (customer) to think that the products these businesses sell are of high quality; therefore, worth buying.

Drinkware and Romance:

The themes of ‘drinkware’ and ‘romance’ are the least frequently used motifs in naming water filtration plants in Jordan. Drinkware, such as *qarūra* ‘a water cooler bottle’ and *xābya* ‘a clay water pot’, account only for 1% of the names in the corpus. Similarly, romantic phrases, such as *waqt al-yurūb* ‘sunset’ and *qurrat al-ḥayn* ‘the apple of the eye’ comprise only 1% of the names under investigation. While romantic names are not expected to be frequent in the corpus, we expected drinkware to feature more than the 1%. It seems that Jordanian water filtration plant owners do not think that naming their plants after drinkware will attract customers as it is an obvious marketing ploy.

Discussion:

Al-Kharabsheh, et al. (2008) argue that shop names are an integral component of the linguistic landscape of any city in the world. They even claim that shop names form an interesting genre of their own because they mark the public space. Choosing a name for a shop, an office, or a firm is a random process. Various factors are at play when someone decides to choose such names. In addition, the choice of such names is not always a personal affair as family, friends and regulations may also play an active role in this choice (see Hasan, et al., 2015). The findings of the thematic analysis of the water filtration plants' names in Jordan in this study have indicated that the most frequent theme is 'names'. The results show that a staggering 48% of the water plants are either named after a person, a family or a place. Silva (2017) recommends that owners should only name their businesses after themselves only when they have unique names and they want to be the centre of attention. If the essence of the business is personal (e.g. artworks), naming a business after the name of the creator seems to be common-sense. However, if the essence of the business is not personal or if the owners do not want their faces and names to be publicly visible, then choosing a different type of name for the business is better (Silva, 2017). Although filtering water is not in essence personal, the findings show that water plant owners in Jordan prefer to name their businesses after themselves, their parents, their offspring, or even their birthplaces. This might be best interpreted in relation to the Jordanian family ties. Although Jordan is a modern peaceful country, it essentially has a tribal society. Bragging about the tribe one belongs to is a common linguistic and social practice within the Jordanian speech community. Thus, naming businesses after one's full name or family name might be another reflection of the so-called tribal pride.

Religion is another dominant theme in the names under investigation. Purchasing decisions are influenced by religion and religious symbolism, especially in religious and semi-religious societies (Essoo & Dibb, 2010; Kalliny et al., 2019). Amazingly, some businesses use religion in marketing their products and, at the same time, some religious institutions use various marketing strategies to attract new followers. Nardella (2014, p. 1) accurately describes this reciprocal relationship between businesses and religious institutions:

The mixture of faith and business has become increasingly evident. On the one hand, religious organizations employ sophisticated marketing

techniques to attract various resources, including members, volunteers, funds, and public support. On the other hand, the business world appropriates religious and spiritual content to publicize and sell its products and services.

When owners in Jordan choose a religious theme for the names of their businesses, they want to send a message to the readers (customers) that they themselves are religious people and are worthy of trust (see Al Abdullah & Al-Ramadan). In other words, religious symbolism in a shop name like *al-amāna* ‘honesty’ hints to high quality products in the best prices.

The theme of quality is as important as the previous discussed themes since it is closely related to the product sold at these plants, i.e., filtered water. Indeed, the principal reason for buying potable water from the water filtration plants in Jordan is the pursuit of better quality than that of tap water. Hence, choosing names that promise high-quality (clarity, purity and serenity) filtered water to the consumers is not that surprising. The theme of quality is closely related to other themes in the corpus, such as ‘source’ and ‘technology’. Both of these latter themes express commitment to high quality water that comes from reliable sources. Quality is probably hinted to also when names are linked to historic figures, events or objects. Finally, witty names that play with words are intended to stick in memory (Condry, 1989).

Conclusion:

This study is a thematic analysis of water filtration plants’ names in Irbid, the second largest city in terms of population density in the north of Jordan. Based on a corpus of 382 names, the findings of this study show the following themes ordered from the most frequent to the least frequent: names (personal, family, place and *kunya* ‘Teknonym’), religion, quality, wit (humour and pun), patriotism, source, history, technology, drinkware and romance. The first three themes are the most prominent as they comprise 81% of the data. To understand why the majority of water plant owners name their businesses after themselves or their close relatives, the findings should be interpreted in relation to the nature of the Jordanian tribal society where individuals have strong feelings of belonging to their families and tribes. As religious symbolism is often used in almost all religious societies, it is not surprising that Jordanians use it in naming their filtered water plants. Moreover, promoting the high quality of the products is not confined to water filtered plants as almost all business owners try to reflect

that either in the names of their businesses or in their advertisements. This study may be replicated with a larger corpus to probe the same topic but with a wider focus. For instance, comparing and contrasting the names of water filtration plants in different areas in Jordan may yield interesting findings. Furthermore, a quantitative analysis of the names under investigation through interviews with the owners might reveal more insights about this issue.

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