BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

NAMING THE AIRWAVES: STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC PATTERNING AND NAME-SLOGAN COMPLEMENTARITY IN UK AND US RADIO BRANDING

Bekhzod Yunusov

PhD student at Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages

Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22206906

Abstract: Radio station branding compresses identification, format, place, affect, and audience positioning into forms suitable for frequent on-air repetition. This study examines how these functions are distributed between station names and slogans in a balanced purposive corpus of 60 English-language name–slogan pairs from the United Kingdom and the United States. Names were analysed structurally, derivationally, and semantically; slogans were classified by syntactic pattern and communicative function; and each pair was examined as an integrated unit. The samples reveal contrasting strategies. The British sample favours transparent lexical cores and subbrand extensions that encode period, genre, or mood, whereas the American sample relies mainly on call signs, frequencies, and alphanumeric identifiers. Nominal-elliptical slogans predominate in both samples, although American slogans more often combine locality, format, and presenter identity through coordinated structures. The findings support a relational view of the name–slogan pair as a nominative–interpretive microtext: the name establishes reference, while the slogan reinforces, narrows, or completes its meaning. The principal cross-market difference therefore lies in how semantic information is allocated between the two components.

Keywords: radio branding; commercial names; slogans; onomastics; word formation; alphanumeric naming; microtext

1. Introduction

Radio station identity is simultaneously a proper name, a commercial sign, and a recurrent broadcast event. A station brand is voiced between songs, embedded in jingles, displayed in digital interfaces, and paired with a slogan during identification. Repetition under strict time constraints rewards forms that are rapidly recognisable yet sufficiently informative to indicate format, place, mood, or programme affiliation. Because these identities are routinely heard as well as read, they also belong to the wider domain of auditory branding, in which non-musical verbal and sonic cues can become stable identifiers (Graakjær & Bonde, 2018).

Contemporary onomastics does not reduce proper names to semantically empty labels. Names identify individual referents, but they may retain lexical associations and acquire social or indexical meanings in use (Coates, 2006; Van Langendonck, 2007). Commercial names intensify this duality because reference is coupled with differentiation and positioning (Ainiala et al., 2012; Sjöblom, 2016). Thus, Heart and Magic function as unique station names while activating affective frames, whereas KFI AM 640 identifies precisely but remains comparatively opaque about content.

Formal brevity must also be distinguished from derivational simplicity. A one-token form may be a simplex lexeme, compound, blend, initialism, or call sign; a multiword form may extend an existing brand family (Bauer et al., 2013; Plag, 2018). The contrast between talkSPORT and KISSTORY illustrates the point: the former preserves two complete bases, while the latter blends KISS and history (Danilović Jeremić & Josijević, 2019). Slogans add a second verbal layer whose

clarity, rhetorical organisation, and association with the brand can influence interpretation, recall, and brand equity (Keller, 1993; Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005; Kohli et al., 2007, 2013; Dass et al., 2014; Anwar, 2015; Miller & Toman, 2016). Yet names and slogans are commonly examined as separate objects.

This study therefore asks: which structural and derivational patterns organise the two name samples (RQ1); whether dominant semantic motivations differ by market (RQ2); which syntactic patterns characterise the slogans (RQ3); and how names and slogans divide identificational and interpretive work (RQ4). Its central proposal is that the recurrent pair constitutes a compact discourse unit rather than a name followed by an optional promotional phrase.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Corpus and unit of analysis

The dataset comprised a purposive, balanced inventory of 60 English-language radio station name-slogan pairs, with 30 items from the United Kingdom and 30 from the United States. The design supports comparison between equally sized samples; it is not a census of either market. Three units were examined: the station name, the slogan, and the complete pair. The inventory includes lexical brands (Heart), multiword names (Smooth Radio), brand extensions (Capital Dance), compounds and blends (talkSPORT, KISSTORY), initialisms and call signs (LBC, WEBN), and frequency-bearing complexes (102.7 KIIS-FM, KFI AM 640).

2.2. Coding procedure

Coding proceeded in ordered layers to prevent form, formation, meaning, and function from being conflated. Name structure was coded as simplex, multiword/phrasal, compound or blend, abbreviation/call-sign based, or alphanumeric. Derivational interpretation was recorded separately as proprialisation, compounding, blending, initialism/call-sign formation, or brand-family extension; FM and AM were treated as technical band designators. Each name then received one dominant semantic code: affective-evaluative, institutional-identifying, temporal-nostalgic, genre/content, territorial, or information-talk. Slogans were assigned one syntactic class: noun-phrase/elliptical, coordinated/parallel, verb-based descriptive, temporal enumeration, imperative, or declarative. Communicative functions were coded independently and could co-occur: content, territory, evaluation, listening experience, nostalgia, programme/personality linkage, and direct appeal. A complete rule-based re-audit was conducted for internal consistency. Because no independent second-coder record was available, no inter-coder coefficient is claimed.

2.3. Statistical analysis

Frequencies and within-market percentages were calculated for semantic and syntactic categories. Sparse expected counts made asymptotic chi-square p-values unsuitable, so association was evaluated with the two-sided Fisher-Freeman-Halton exact test for 2 × k tables (Freeman & Halton, 1951; Agresti, 2019). Cramér's V, calculated from Pearson's chi-square statistic, indexed effect size. Inferential results describe association within this 60-item corpus and are not estimates of national prevalence.

3. Results

3.1. Structural and derivational profiles

The UK sample was organised chiefly around lexically accessible cores and brand-family extension. Sixteen of the 30 names expanded an established brand with a period, genre, mood, or repertoire marker, as in Heart 80s, Capital Chill, Radio X Classic Rock, and Smooth Chill. Graphically compact forms were not structurally equivalent: talkSPORT is a compound of complete bases, KISSTORY is a blend, and LBC is an initialism functioning as a stable identifier.

The US sample was dominated by technical-institutional indexing: 28 of 30 names used a call sign, frequency, or other alphanumeric configuration. Recurrent orders included frequency plus call sign (102.7 KIIS-FM), identifier plus frequency (KOST 103.5; Power 105.1), and call sign plus band and frequency (KFI AM 640). The numeral is a frequency index rather than an affix, and capital letters do not by themselves make every call sign an acronym. The salient contrast is therefore lexical brand extension in the UK set and alphanumeric complexing in the US set.

3.2. Dominant semantic motivation

Table 1. *Dominant semantic motivation of station names by market*

Semantic category	UK, n (%)	US, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Affective-evaluative	13 (43.3)	11 (36.7)	24 (40.0)
Institutional-identifying	2 (6.7)	16 (53.3)	18 (30.0)
Temporal-nostalgic	9 (30.0)	0 (0.0)	9 (15.0)
Genre/content	5 (16.7)	1 (3.3)	6 (10.0)
Territorial	0 (0.0)	2 (6.7)	2 (3.3)
Information-talk	1 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.7)
Total	30 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Note. Categories are mutually exclusive. Two-sided exact p = .0000053; Cramér's V = .655.

Semantic motivation was strongly associated with market. Affective-evaluative naming was the largest category overall (24/60), but the sharpest contrasts concerned institutional-identifying names (16 US versus 2 UK) and temporal-nostalgic names (9 UK versus none in the US sample). Institutional forms such as KIIS-FM, KOST, and KFI are not meaningless: they carry stable indexical value, although they do not transparently name a genre or mood. By contrast, UK extensions such as Heart 80s and Radio X 90s locate repertoire in time, while Capital Dance and Radio X Classic Rock encode content within the name itself.

3.3. Syntactic architecture of slogans

Table 2. *Syntactic models of radio slogans by market*

Syntactic model	UK, n (%)	US, n (%)	Total, n (%)
Noun-phrase/elliptical	21 (70.0)	19 (63.3)	40 (66.7)
Coordinated/parallel	1 (3.3)	8 (26.7)	9 (15.0)
Verb-based descriptive	4 (13.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (6.7)
Temporal enumeration	0 (0.0)	3 (10.0)	3 (5.0)
Imperative	2 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.3)
Declarative	2 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.3)
Total	30 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Note. Classes are mutually exclusive. Two-sided exact p = .0014; Cramér's V = .525.

Noun-phrase and elliptical construction was the shared default (40/60). Expressions such as 'The UK's No.1 Hit Music Station', 'Today's Best Country', and 'More Stimulating Talk' compress a proposition into a short nominal unit suited to station identification and jingles. The broader distributions nevertheless differed. Coordinated and parallel slogans were concentrated in the US set (8/30), where a single line could combine locality, format, and presenter, as in 'LA's No.1 Hit Music Station & Home of Ryan Seacrest'. The UK set contained the minor verb-based, imperative, and declarative patterns, including 'Turn Up The Feel Good' and 'Real music matters'; temporal lists such as '80s, 90s, and Today' occurred only in the US subset.

3.4. Name-slogan complementarity

The pair displayed a recurrent relational architecture that neither component revealed alone. It can be modelled as a nominative-interpretive microtext: the name anchors the referent, while the slogan supplies the minimum discourse required to interpret the brand. Four relations recurred. A slogan may reinforce an available frame (Heart - "Turn Up The Feel Good"); specify a broad lexical name (Capital - "The UK's No.1 Hit Music Station"); disclose the format of an opaque identifier (KFI AM 640 - "More Stimulating Talk"); or augment the name with several cues (102.7 KIIS-FM - "LA's No.1 Hit Music Station & Home of Ryan Seacrest").

Table 3. *Principal interpretive relations within the name-slogan microtext*

Relation	**Interpretive work of the slogan**	**Illustrative pair**
Reinforcement	Activates meaning already available in the name	Heart - Turn Up The Feel Good
Specification	Narrows a broad lexical brand	Capital - The UK's No.1 Hit Music Station
Disclosure	Reveals the format of an opaque identifier	KFI AM 640 - More Stimulating Talk
Augmentation	Adds locality, content, evaluation, or personality	102.7 KIIS-FM - LA's No.1 Hit Music Station & Home of Ryan Seacrest

Note. The relations describe the dominant contribution of the slogan in the illustrated pair; additional functions may co-occur.

Syntactic form and communicative function remained distinct: one noun phrase could simultaneously encode content, territory, and superiority. UK pairs more often reinforced or narrowed information already present in a lexical extension, whereas US pairs more often completed a frequency or call-sign complex with locality, format, rank, or personality. The cross-market difference thus lies partly in where semantic information is placed across the two components.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal a division of semiotic labour rather than a simple opposition between creative and technical naming. UK brands in this sample favour lexically transparent families whose modifiers create recognisable subcategories. US brands concentrate identificational precision in call signs and frequencies, then shift promotional interpretation to the slogan. This pattern extends commercial-name theory by showing that reference and characterisation need not occupy the same form (Sjöblom, 2016): recoverable meaning may be distributed across a recurrent pair.

The dominance of noun-phrase and elliptical slogans is functional, not merely stylistic. Reduced syntax foregrounds content nouns and evaluators while remaining economical in announcer turns. Coordinated US forms answer a different pressure by packaging several cues around an opaque name; parallelism and recurrent constructions such as "Home of ..." maintain fluency despite greater informational density. These observations are consistent with research showing that slogan form, clarity, and rhetorical design affect brand association and memorability (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2005; Kohli et al., 2007, 2013; Dass et al., 2014; Anwar, 2015; Miller & Toman, 2016). Linguistic distinctiveness also matters for brand-name memory and retrieval (Klink, 2000; Lowrey et al., 2003; Lambert-Pandraud et al., 2018).

The layered coding scheme also addresses a recurrent methodological problem in commercial onomastics: graphic form, word-formation, semantic motivation, syntax, and pragmatic function are related but not interchangeable. Keeping these levels separate prevents frequency digits from being treated as morphemes, call signs from being labelled acronyms solely because they are capitalised, and evaluative meanings from being mistaken for syntactic types. The combination of mutually exclusive semantic and syntactic codes with multi-label functional coding provides a more reproducible basis for comparative onomastic analysis (Motschenbacher, 2020).

The nominative-interpretive microtext is the study's main conceptual contribution. Brand-name research commonly asks what a name identifies or evokes, whereas slogan research asks what a line claims and how it is remembered. Radio branding demonstrates that these questions are interdependent: interpretation can be reinforced, narrowed, disclosed, or supplemented across two repeatedly co-present units. A practical implication follows: station identity should be evaluated at pair level. A transparent extension may use its slogan to reinforce affect or listening experience; a call-sign/frequency name normally requires the slogan to disclose at least format or locality. Redundancy is therefore not automatically wasteful, and brevity alone does not guarantee communicative completeness.

The evidence remains bounded. The corpus is balanced but purposive; it lacks a uniform time-stamped harvesting log, ownership and audience controls, and independent coding. The exact tests establish association within 60 items, not national prevalence or historical stability. Future studies should archive official webpages, spoken idents, jingles, and sonic logos by date; stratify samples by format and ownership; report inter-coder reliability; and test whether reinforcement, specification, disclosure, and augmentation produce different levels of listener recognition and recall (Graakjær & Bonde, 2018).

5. Conclusion

UK and US radio brands in this corpus distribute information differently across the name-slogan pair. UK stations typically use lexical cores and brand extensions that encode period, genre, or mood; US stations rely heavily on call signs, frequencies, and alphanumeric complexes, leaving slogans to express locality, format, evaluation, and personality. Noun-phrase and elliptical slogans are a shared norm, but wider semantic and syntactic profiles diverge. The pair is therefore best understood as a compact nominative-interpretive microtext whose components jointly perform identification and interpretation.

References

1. Agresti, A. (2019). An introduction to categorical data analysis (3rd ed.). Wiley.
2. Ainiala, T., Saarelma, M., & Sjöblom, P. (2012). Names in focus: An introduction to Finnish onomastics. Finnish Literature Society. https://doi.org/10.21435/sflin.17
3. Anwar, S. T. (2015). Company slogans, morphological issues, and corporate communications. Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 20(3), 360–374. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-09-2013-0056
4. Bauer, L., Lieber, R., & Plag, I. (2013). The Oxford reference guide to English morphology. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198747062.001.0001
5. Coates, R. (2006). Properhood. Language, 82(2), 356–382. https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.2006.0084
6. Dahlén, M., & Rosengren, S. (2005). Brands affect slogans affect brands? Competitive interference, brand equity and the brand-slogan link. Journal of Brand Management, 12, 151–164. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540212

7. Danilović Jeremić, J., & Josijević, J. (2019). To blend so as to brand: A study of trademarks and brand names. Lexis, 14. https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.3732
8. Dass, M., Kohli, C., Kumar, P., & Thomas, S. (2014). A study of the antecedents of slogan liking. Journal of Business Research, 67(12), 2504–2511. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.05.004
9. Freeman, G. H., & Halton, J. H. (1951). Note on an exact treatment of contingency, goodness of fit and other problems of significance. Biometrika, 38(1–2), 141–149. https://doi.org/10.1093/biomet/38.1-2.141
10. Graakjær, N. J., & Bonde, A. (2018). Non-musical sound branding: A conceptualization and research overview. European Journal of Marketing, 52(7–8), 1505–1525. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-09-2017-0609
11. Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. Journal of Marketing, 57(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101
12. Klink, R. R. (2000). Creating brand names with meaning: The use of sound symbolism. Marketing Letters, 11(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008184423824
13. Kohli, C., Leuthesser, L., & Suri, R. (2007). Got slogan? Guidelines for creating effective slogans. Business Horizons, 50(5), 415–422. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2007.05.002
14. Kohli, C., Thomas, S., & Suri, R. (2013). Are you in good hands? Slogan recall: What really matters. Journal of Advertising Research, 53(1), 31–42. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-53-1-031-042
15. Lambert-Pandraud, R., Laurent, G., & Gourvennec, B. (2018). Investigating brand verbal fluency:

16. When known brands do not come to mind. *International Journal of Market Research, 60*(3), 304–315.

17. Lowrey, T. M., Shrum, L. J., & Dubitsky, T. M. (2003). The relation between brand-name linguistic characteristics and brand-name memory. Journal of Advertising, 32(3), 7–17.
18. Miller, D. W., & Toman, M. (2016). An analysis of rhetorical figures and other linguistic devices in corporation brand slogans. Journal of Marketing Communications, 22(5), 474–493.
19. Motschenbacher, H. (2020). Corpus linguistic onomastics: A plea for a corpus-based investigation of names. Names, 68(2), 88–103.
20. Plag, I. (2018). *Word-formation in English* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

21. Sjöblom, P. (2016). Commercial names. In C. Hough (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of names and naming* (pp. 453–464). Oxford University Press.

22. Van Langendonck, W. (2007). *Theory and typology of proper names*. De Gruyter Mouton.