Alexander Dübbert

Product names as diagrammatic-iconic compositions

On the Grammatical Relevance of Typography Based on the Example of Product Names on Food Packaging in Germany

By means of product names, manufacturers refer clearly and at the same time in an advertising manner (cf. Nübling et al. 2015: 268) to a product, an article, a good or a service – for example, with the product name *GUT & GÜNSTIG Knäckebrot Sesam* to the product contained in a package with the respective lettering (see Fig. 1). This basically distinguishes product names from brand names, which can be used to make a clear and advertising reference to brands protected by trademarks, e.g. *GUT & GÜNSTIG*. Sometimes the product name and brand name correspond to each other, e.g. *Mars* or *Rama*.

Figure 1: GUT & GÜNSTIG Knäckebrot Sesam

As already indicated by the example of *GUT & GÜNSTIG Knäckebrot Sesam*, brand names nevertheless form an important component of product names to mark them against competing products, such as *wasa Sesam*. Beyond that, product names often contain further linguistic additions, above all different kinds of specifications respectively attributes, such as *Sesam*. Accordingly, product names constitute extensive compositions with a controversial status as a name (cf. Nübling et al. 2015: 269–270), whose composition turns out to be extremely diverse (cf. Nübling et al. 2015: 270). However, a systematic analysis of how the diverse compositions of product names were put together is still pending (cf. Nübling et al. 2015: 270) and is therefore a desideratum.

To contribute to the systematization of product name compositions is the aim of this talk. Using a cognitive-grammar approach (cf. Langacker 1987, 1991, 2005, 2008), results of a

quantitatively supported qualitative analysis are presented with the help of a pattern-oriented adaptation of collection analysis (cf. Schegloff 1997) based on a corpus of 1,317 photographs of food packaging taken between 2019 and 2021. This reveals that in order to clarify the types of composition of product names, the pattern-like typographic design (cf. Stöckl 2004; Spitzmüller 2013) of product names on food packaging, as used by manufacturers, is essential. The reason is that the structural relations of the components of product name compositions are typically mirrored in the typographic design. This means the concept of diagrammatic iconicity (cf. Peirce 1978, 1983) is at work. Overall, the talk identifies several superordinate types with multiple subtypes with regard to product names on food packaging in Germany, so that product names qualify as multimodal constructions with constitutive typographic design (cf. Dübbert 2021).

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