

Linguistic Analysis of Trademarks of Selected Buffet Restaurants in SM Mall of Asia, Manila

Ubaldu Djonda^{1✉} & Angelita R. Mendoza²

¹Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira, Kupang

²University of Santo Tomas, Manila

✉Jln. San Juan No. 1, Penfui Timur, Kecamatan Kupang Tengah, Kabupaten Kupang, NTT, Indonesia

✉ubaldusdjonda1@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Trademarks are important for business establishments because they express the origin and quality of the companies, but it is not always easy to know and employ linguistic elements to craft good trademarks. Thus, to see the linguistic characteristics and strength of trademarks, the study has an objective to examine the trademarks of selected buffet restaurants at SM Mall of Asia, in Pasay, Metro Manila, Philippines. The data were taken from nine buffet restaurants. The analysis was done by referring to Shuy's (2002) linguistic tools and Butters' (2010) framework. The findings reveal that the linguistic characteristics mainly used by the buffet restaurants were lexicography, phonetics, morphology, and semantics. In terms of lexicography, most trademarks have their etymological meaning and historical development in the dictionaries, except Charaptor and Yakimix, which are coined words. In phonetics, the trademarks have phonetic characteristics of 1-3 syllables. Then the morphological analysis shows that the trademarks consist of noun phrases, affixation, and word formation (clipping). In semantics, five trademarks do not have synonyms and polysemy; three have synonyms, and two have polysemy. In terms of strength, the trademarks were classified from the weak to the strongest as follows: Buffet 101 (descriptive); Cabalen, La Fiesta, Oceana (suggestive); Four Seasons, Vikings (arbitrary); and Charaptor, GEN, Yakimix (fanciful). The findings imply that business owners need to create their companies' trademarks in arbitrary or fanciful categories.

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INTRODUCTION

Linguistic analysis can determine the extent to which two trademarks have similarities in likelihood-of-confusion cases. Durant and Davis (2021) assert that "a language is an object of analysis in disputes over registered trademarks and signs or works where there is an alleged infringement of copyright" (p. 344). The linguistic analysis also helps owners of business enterprises in crafting their trademarks appropriately by taking into consideration the

characteristics of weak and strong brands. Based on such assumptions, this study conducted a linguistic analysis of the trademarks of selected buffet restaurants in Manila, the Philippines.

Trademark is “a symbol, phrase, or name used by a maker of a product or provider of a service to distinguish the product or service from others of its kind” (Landau, 2001, p. 405). Similarly, Butters (2008) defines a trademark as “proprietary words, phrases, and images used in commerce to distinguish publicly offered products and services one from another” (p. 231). Furthermore, Linford (2015) emphasizes that “a trademark is created when a new meaning is added to an existing word or when a new word is invented to identify the source of a product” (p. 110). In Philippine law, a trademark is a property right acknowledged and protected by the government. Republic Act No. 8293 Sec 4.1 (1997) reveals that the term intellectual property rights consist of, among others: a) copyright and related rights; b) trademarks and service marks; c) geographic indications; d) industrial design; and e) patents.

By enacting laws on trademarks, the Philippine government protects the legal right of its citizens since a registered trademark establishes the legal right of its owner. Burge (1999) supports this point when he says, “a trademark establishes, for one who has adopted it, the legal right to prevent others from using the same or a similar mark in a way that presents a likelihood of confusion of buyers” (p. 140). The right of the trademark’s owner is violated when other parties use the same or similar trademark, which is known as likelihood-of-confusion cases (Butters, 2008), in which linguistic analysis is usually performed to establish evidence to settle the issue.

In applied linguistics, the research on trademarks is part of the forensic linguistics sub-field, whose main interest is in legal language. Most studies have been conducted on trademark disputes. To cite some examples, Sanderson (2007) reported her comparative studies on the marks of ALLERGAN vs ALLERGIN, and ALLERGAN vs ALLERTAC. In the latter case, she discovered that at the orthographic level, the words ALLERGAN and ALLERTAC differ in two letters only, (*g* versus *t*) and (*n* versus *c*), while the other six letters are identical. At the phonetic level, “both ALLERGAN and ALLERGIN are three-syllable words” (p. 140), and at the morphological level, “both words consist of the same root, *allerg-*, which occurs most commonly in words such as *allergy*, *allergic*, etc.” (p. 141). Another attempt to analyze the trademark dispute was carried out by Johannessen (2008), who examined similarities between Rolls Royce PLC and PR Chokolade. The findings indicate that contrary to the assessment of the Danish Maritime and Commercial Court that the graphic mark of PR Chokolade has a high degree of likeness with RR PLC, both marks are actually different.

In the same vein, Sadi-Makangila and Sabira (2020) investigated the Adidas vs Abidas case from the category of sight (visual similarity) and the category of meaning (conceptual similarity) and disclosed that Adidas and Abidas have a very high percentage of graphic similarity, at 83%. As regards the meaning, Adidas is a combination of two names, “Adi” and “das” referring to the founder of the company, Adolf Dassler, “while the meaning of Abidas could be different from Adidas as they are two different brands” (p. 134). The same authors, Sadi-Makangila and Sabira (2021), examined the trademark dispute between DOUBLEMINT and DOUBIEMINT and found that the two brands have high graphic similarity (80%). At the semantic level, DOUBLEMINT is “a combination of two English words descriptive name as it has a mint-based composition and mint flavour; therefore this chewing gum smells the aromatic leaves of the plant mint while on

the other side DOUBIEMLNT is a fanciful name without meaning” (p. 4). Another study on trademark disputes was conducted by Syahroni, Nu'man, and Heniarti (2022). They investigated the dispute between IKEA and IKEMA brands through graphemic and phonetic analysis and discovered that both trademarks are similar.

As shown in the literature review above, a few identified linguistic analyses of trademarks focus on the likelihood-of-confusion. There are no existing studies on trademarks from a linguistic perspective that are not related to legal disputes. To fill this gap, this study aims to examine trademarks without legal contentions to shed light on the linguistic characteristics of buffet restaurant trademarks and the strength of the brand names. This academic exercise can help business people to prepare trademarks of their business enterprises appropriately.

In particular, this study explored the linguistic characteristics of selected buffet restaurants at SM Mall of Asia, Pasay, Metro Manila, Philippines, so as to answer the following questions: 1) What are the linguistic characteristics present in the selected trademarks of buffet restaurants in SM Mall of Asia? 2) How do the existing trademark characteristics signify the strength of the trademark? This study is considered beneficial for restaurant owners or other business people in terms of preparing good trademarks for their companies. It is also significant for linguistic students interested in trademark studies.

Theoretical framework

Shuy's (2002) framework on linguistic tools

The study identified linguistic characteristics of the selected trademarks grounded on Shuy's (2002) linguistic tools. Shuy employs six linguistic components used in trademark disputes in his framework: phonetics, morphology, lexicography, semantic meaning, syntax, and pragmatics. However, this study used four of the six components, namely phonetics, morphology, lexicography, and semantics, because of their visible presence in the trademarks being investigated. The following are brief descriptions of the linguistic components.

First, phonetics is the study of the nature, production, and perception of the sounds of speech (Shuy, 2002). In his analysis, Shuy uses some phonetics and phonological features, such as syllables, stress, pauses, juncture, and intonation. For the purpose of this study, only phonetic features, syllables, and stress were used.

Second, morphology is the study of the grammatical structure and the category of words (Shuy, 2002). Linguists refer to the units of the lexicon (words) or grammatical units (such as the past tense marker -ed) that are smaller than a word as morphemes. Thus the word “unthoughtful” is considered to be made up of the morphemes “un-,” “thought,” and “-ful.” The base form, “thought,” is called a free morpheme because it can occur by itself as an independent word. But “un-” and “-ful” are derivational affixes, called bound morphemes. In the word “cars,” the free morpheme is “car,” and the bound morpheme is the “-s” plural marker, as a grammatical inflection. This study only identified word structure and affixation present in the selected trademarks.

Third, lexicography is a study of lexicon, which focuses on individual words as they appear in the dictionary. In trademark cases, dictionaries are used to determine the pronunciation, etymology,

and meaning of words (Shuy, 2002). In this study, the etymological meaning of trademarks was analyzed.

Fourth, semantics refer to the meaning of words individually as they appear in dictionaries and other references (Shuy, 2002). In trademark disputes, issues on synonyms, hyponyms, antonyms, polysemy (where the words or expressions have more than one meaning), and homonymy (words or expressions with two or more written shapes) were also considered. In this study, synonyms and polysemy of the selected trademarks were examined.

Butters' (2010) framework on trademark strength

Butters (2010) claims that the strength of the mark – whether a trademark is deemed weak or strong depends on whether it falls along the following continuum of categories: “(1) generic, (2) descriptive, (3) suggestive, (4) arbitrary, and (5) fanciful, where (1) is the weakest and (4) and (5) are the strongest” (p. 358). The categories are based on McCarthy’s (1984) categories of marks: arbitrary or fanciful, suggestive, descriptive, and generic.

A generic trademark is a mark related to the characteristics of an entire group or class of things. ‘Cola’ is generic, while ‘Pepsi-Cola’ is not. Thus, generic words such as ‘salt’ and ‘computer’ are available for anyone to use freely.

Descriptive words describe the qualities, ingredients, or characteristics of a product, making them difficult to protect as trademarks. The descriptive designation includes names that are laudatory and descriptive of the alleged merit of the product, such as Gold Medal or Blue Ribbon. A descriptive trademark, however, can be protected if it has a “secondary meaning.” It happens when consumers associate the trademark with one – and only one – source of supply for goods (Shilling, 2002). For example, the prefix Mc- in McDonald’s had gone through the process of lexical generalization and has been accepted by the public as denoting only one seller or source through secondary meaning, despite its descriptive nature (referring to a hamburger restaurant chain).

Suggestive marks require some operation of the imagination to connect the name with the product. The trademark, Greyhound (a bus line), for example, suggests sleekness and speed, and Tide (a laundry soap) is suggestive to the extent that it pleasantly suggests water.

An arbitrary mark “consists of a word or symbol which is in common usage in the language, but which is arbitrarily applied to the goods or services in question in such a way that it is not descriptive or suggestive” (McCarty, 1984, p. 439). Examples are Black and White (scotch whisky), Nova (television series), Camel (cigarettes), Shell (gasoline), and Apple (computers) (Shuy, 2002). Moreover, an arbitrary trademark is a word that can be found in the dictionary but that is not normally considered related to the product. It can become a protected trademark immediately. CAMEL for cigarettes and HORIZON for banking services are arbitrary trademarks (Shilling, 2002).

McCarthy (1984) defines a fanciful mark as “a word which is coined for the sole purpose of functioning as a trademark” (p. 436). Fanciful words are ones that are either totally unknown in the language or are completely out of the current common usage, as with obsolete or scientific

terms that are not familiar to ordinary customers. Well-recognized examples of fanciful trademarks include KODAK (photography equipment), and CLOROX (bleach) (Shuy, 2002). The fanciful trademark is the strongest type of trademark (entitled to protection immediately upon use) because consumers cannot associate the trademark with anything except the particular provider's goods; it has no meaning otherwise (Shilling, 2002).

METHODS

Research Design

The qualitative research design was employed to determine the linguistic characteristics of the nine trademarks of buffet restaurants through Shuy's (2002) framework about linguistic tools, and Butters' (2010) framework on the strength of trademarks.

Corpus and Study Site

This study used the corpus of nine buffet restaurant trademarks at SM Mall of Asia, located in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines. The names of the restaurants are Four Seasons, Vikings, Buffet 101, La Fiesta, Oceana, Gen, Charaptor, Yakimix, and Cabalen.

Procedure and analysis

The data were gathered through a field observation at those restaurants in October 2017. The nine restaurants were selected based on the criteria: located in SM Mall of Asia and the minimum price of P300. There were other restaurants also listed in the initial observation, such as Morganfield's and Paradise Dynasty, but further research showed that they are not buffet restaurants, so they were excluded from the corpus.

The nine trademarks were analyzed with the help of linguistic tools. The selected buffet restaurants were examined visually by the researchers to see the existing linguistic materials according to the tools used by Shuy (2002). Likewise, the strength of the trademarks was explored by the researchers using Butters' (2010) categories of trademarks. The data were then interpreted grounded on the identified linguistic characteristics and strength of the trademarks to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic characteristics of the trademarks

This part presents the results and discussion of the linguistic characteristics of the selected trademarks, to answer research question 1, "What are the linguistic characteristics present in the selected trademarks of buffet restaurants in SM Mall of Asia?" The linguistic characteristics are described in terms of lexicography, morphology, semantics, and phonetics.

Lexicography

Four Seasons



Figure 1: Four Seasons

Figure 1 above displays the trademark of Four Seasons Buffet and Hotspot. The restaurant comes from the group that introduced Vikings Luxury Buffet and NIU. FOUR SEASONS refers to the four seasons of the year: winter, spring, summer and fall. The word ‘season’ is defined as a period of the year, with reference to weather or proper time or suitable occasion. It originated from the old French ‘*seison*’ which meant appropriate time. Another modern French word ‘*saison*’ emerged which refers to sowing or planting (www.dictionary.com).

Vikings



Figure 2: Vikings

Figure 2 shows the trademark of Vikings Restaurant. Vikings are any of the Scandinavian pirates who plundered the coasts of Europe from the 8th to 10th centuries. The word is a historical revival. It was not used in Middle English, but it was revived from Old Norse *vikingr* which means ‘freebooter, sea-rover, pirate, viking’. It refers to one who came from the *vik* “creek, inlet, and small bay (<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=viking>).

Buffet 101



Figure 3: Buffet 101

Figure 3 describes the trademark of Buffet 101. Historically, the word ‘buffet’ is from the Old French verb ‘*bufeter*’ that means to strike, slap, or punch. Another meaning emerged in 1718 from the French word ‘*bufet*’, a noun which means bench, stool, or sideboard. The meaning of ‘buffet’ in English was extended to “refreshment bar, a place set aside for refreshments in public

space' (1792), then via buffet-table, buffet car (1887), and by 1951 to 'meal served from a buffet' (<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=buffet>).

La Fiesta



Figure 4: La Fiesta

Figure 4 is the trademark of La Fiesta Restaurant. *La* is a feminine form of the French definite article and is used in English in certain phrases and sometimes added ironically to a woman's name with a suggestion of "prima donna" (www.etimonline.com). While *fiesta* is a noun that means a religious festival or celebration, especially on a saint's day or a holiday or carnival. It originated from the Latin word '*fiesta*' which is a plural of '*festum*' which means festival (www.collinsdictionary.com).

Oceana



Figure 5: Oceana

Figure 5 portrays the trademark of Oceana Restaurant. The name was probably derived from '*oceania*' which is the southern Pacific Island and Australia, conceived as a continent (1849). In 1812, it was derived from the French '*océanie*' apparently coined by Danish geographer Conrad Malte-Brun (1755-1826). In 1832, the English word '*oceanica*' emerged. 'Oceania' was the name of one of the superstates in Orwell's "*Nineteen Eighty-Four*." (www.etymonline.com).

Gen



Figure 6: Gen

Figure 6 above is the trademark of Gen Restaurant. Gen could be a name of a person or a shortened word for generation or it may be a suffix '-gen' meaning 'that which produces.' It is used in the formation of compound words: endogen or hydrogen. It is originated from the Greek word '*genēs*'

which means born or produced. It is also associated with the Latin ‘genus’ which means kin (www.dictionary.com).

Charaptor



Figure 7: Charaptor

Figure 7 above illustrates the trademark of Charaptor Restaurant. The name ‘charapator’ is a combination of the word ‘charcoal and raptor’. Charcoal is a noun which is a black amorphous form of carbon made by heating wood, and used as a fuel (www.collinsdictionary.com). The word is from ‘charcole’ where the first element is either Old French ‘charbon’ meaning charcoal or the obsolete word ‘charren’ which means to turn (from Old English cerran) and ‘cole’ meaning coal, thus, "to turn coal" (www.dictionary.com). In 1600, the word ‘raptor’ in Latin meant the one who seizes by force, robber, equivalent to rap. The informal meaning could be a carnivorous bipedal dinosaur of the late Cretaceous period (www.collinsdictionary.com).

Yakimix



Fig. 8: Yakimix

Figure 8 is the trademark of Yakimix Restaurant. Mix in the trademark means an act of mixing, from ‘mix’ in the 1530s; from Middle English ‘myxte’ which means composed of more than one element or of mixed nature; from Anglo-French ‘mixte’; from Latin ‘mixtus’ which is a past participle of ‘miscere’ meaning to mix, mingle, or blend. It may come from the Greek ‘misgein’ or ‘mignynai’ meaning "to mix, mix up or mingle" (https://www.etymonline.com/word/mix).

Cabalen



Figure 9: Cabalen

Figure 9 above presents the trademark of Cabalen Restaurant. The word ‘cabalen’ (*kabalen*) refers to a fellow Kapampangan (people of Pampanga Province in the Philippines). Many

Tagalog-speaking Filipinos are familiar with this Kapampangan word, so they will sometimes affectionately refer to their Pampangueño friends as *Cabalen*.

Linguistic characteristics of the trademarks from the etymological perspectives are 1) English words originated from French (season, buffet, la, charcoal); 2) English words derived from Old Norse (viking); 3) English words originated from Latin (fiesta, raptor); 4) English words derived from Greek (gen, mix); 5) Kapampangan word (cabalen), and 6) unspecified etymology (oceana).

Thus, the findings indicate that the trademarks are mostly English words with etymological meanings in the dictionaries. The English words used in the trademarks were derived from the Indo-European family of languages such as Latin, Greek, and French.

Morphology

Nine trademarks were analyzed based on their word structure and affixation. The findings reveal that three of the trademarks are noun phrases: Four Seasons, Buffet 101, and La Fiesta. The headwords are all nouns in the three trademarks; however, two trademarks have determiners *four* (a numerical adjective) for “Four Seasons” and the French term *La* which is equivalent to the English article ‘the’ for “La Fiesta”. On the other hand, Buffet 101 has a proper noun as a modifier for the headword ‘101’. Affixation was also used in the trademark, particularly the plural forming suffix –s which was present in Vikings and Four Seasons.

Lastly, which could be the most important morphological characteristic found in the trademarks was the word-formation. Clipping was used in “Charaptor” which is a combination of Charcoal and Raptor. Here a word and letter were omitted (coal for charcoal and r for raptor). In Yakimix trademark, a probable coinage of ‘mix’ was used instead of a mixture, while ‘Gen’ could represent a generation.

In this study, the identified morphological features of the trademarks are noun phrases, affixation, and word formation. Other authors mention the inclusion of morphological analysis in the trademark dispute. As stated earlier, Sanderson (2007) discovered that ALLERGAN and ALLERGIN have the same root, *allerg-* which is commonly appeared in words such as *allergy*, and *allergen*. Ibrahim and Nambiar (2013) also point out the decision of the Court that the prefix *Mc*, in the dispute between McCurry Restaurant and McDonald in Malaysia, is a common surname and can be continuously used by McCurry.

Phonetics

For the purpose of this study, only the phonetic features, syllables, and stress were used. All the nine trademarks made used only 1 - 3 syllables: 1 syllable for Gen; two syllables for Vikings; and three syllables each for Four Seasons, Buffet 101, La Fiesta, Oceana, Charaptor, Yakimix, and Cabalen. Two trademarks have primary stress in the first syllable such as ‘Ya’ in **Y**akimix and **V**ikings; five trademarks are stressed on their second syllable such as Four **S**easons, **B**uffet 101, La **f**iesta, **O**ceana, Char**a**ptor; and one trademark is stressed in the third syllable, Cabal**e**n.

The finding of this study reveals that the majority of trademarks have three syllables. Other examples of trademarks with three syllables are ALLERGAN and ALLERGIN. Sanderson (2007)

employed phonetic analysis in the trademark dispute between ALLERGAN and ALLERGIN and found that they have similarities because both words are three-syllable words.

Semantics

In this study, synonyms (a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase) and polysemy (the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase) of the selected trademarks were analyzed. The findings indicate that five trademarks do not have synonyms and polysemy: Oceana, Gen, Charaptor, Yakimix, and Cabalen. Three trademarks have synonyms, namely La Fiesta, Buffet, and Vikings. The characteristic of polysemy was found in Four Seasons, and Buffet. The trademarks with synonyms and polysemy are described subsequently.

First, Four Seasons. The word 'seasons' have two meanings and usage (polysemy). It is a noun which means one of the four equal periods into which the year is divided by the equinoxes and solstices, resulting from the apparent movement of the sun north and south of the equator during the earth's orbit around it. It may also be used as a verb which means "improve the flavour of by adding spices" (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/season>).

Second, Buffet. The word 'buffet' has two functions and meanings (polysemy): a noun and an adjective. Buffet as a noun means: 1. a sideboard or cabinet for holding china, table linen, etc.; 2. a meal laid out on a table or sideboard so that guests may serve themselves; 3. a counter, bar, or the like, for lunch or refreshments; 4. a restaurant containing such a counter or bar. And as an adjective, it refers to what consists of food, refreshments, etc., laid out on tables or buffets from which guests or customers serve themselves: a buffet supper; buffet service. In the trademark, buffet is used as an adjective (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/buffet>). The synonym of buffet is self-service restaurant.

Third, Vikings. In the dictionary, this term refers only to one meaning and functions as a noun. Vikings are "warriors from Scandinavia who raided much of coastal Europe in the eighth to tenth centuries." The synonym of Viking is pirate (<https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/viking>).

Fourth, La Fiesta. The word fiesta means "a time of public entertainment and parties, usually on a special religious holiday, especially in Spain or Latin America". Its synonyms are carnival, party, and holiday. (www.collinsdictionary.com)

In summary, most of the trademarks do not have synonyms and polysemy. It means that they are sufficiently distinctive to qualify as a trademark because there are no other words with similar meanings and the words do not refer to other meanings.

Butters (2010) emphasizes that "a meaning analysis of a trademark begins with the dictionary definitions of the component words and morphemes" (p. 357). Bellido and Pottage (2019) assert this point when they argue that dictionaries can help to identify if trademarks have lapsed into genericity, and "become non-proprietary common nouns; the best examples are words such as thermos, cellophane, frisbee, and escalator". Thus, the main use of dictionaries was "to determine whether a mark was, or had become, descriptive of goods" (p. 120).

Strength of the trademarks

This section provides the results of the data analyses to answer research question 2, “How do the existing trademark characteristics signify the strength of the trademark?” The findings disclose that the trademark of one restaurant is considered descriptive (*Buffet 101*), three trademarks are suggestive (*Cabalen*, *La Fiesta*, and *Oceana*), two trademarks have arbitrary characteristics (*Four Seasons*, and *Vikings*), and three restaurants have fanciful trademarks (*Charaptor*, *Gen*, and *Yakimix*). The following are the descriptions in more detail.

Restaurants with descriptive trademark

Buffet 101 can be considered a descriptive trademark because it seemingly describes the quality of a product. The word ‘buffet’ as a noun has several meanings in English, such as 1) a meal consisting of several dishes from which guests serve themselves; and 2) a room or counter in a station, hotel, or other public building selling light meals or snacks (www.oxforddictionaries.com). Thus, buffet is a common term for a kind of meal served in a restaurant. Number 101 describes a specific type of buffet restaurant. It can also be interpreted that 101 represents a fork, a plate, and a spoon that are placed on a buffet or a table.

Restaurants with suggestive trademark

Cabalen is considered a suggestive trademark. It requires some imagination to connect the name with the product. Kabalen means a fellow Kapampangan. This term refers to people in a particular place in the Philippines, which is the set of sumptuous food and delicacies, while the Kapampangans are widely known as people with good taste and innate cooking talent. Thus, the name of the restaurant suggests a place where people can enjoy authentic traditional home-cooked food in the Kapampangan way.

Another suggestive trademark is La Fiesta. The concept of the La Fiesta trademark is related to one of the Filipino practices, which is to celebrate “Fiesta” which is a way of thanksgiving by Filipinos through community celebration. This restaurant claims itself as the largest Filipino buffet and serves classic and exotic dishes of provincial cuisines, including a variety of street food (such as *balut*, a day-old chicken, *shawarma*, *isaw* and chicken *inasal*) and drinks (such as beer and *buko* juice). The restaurant also features live music and cultural shows. It is for big family occasions and celebrations. The price of buffet is P 670 up to P 900. Since the name of the restaurant is related to the cultural practices of Filipinos to serve various foods during the fiesta, then it can be considered a suggestive trademark.

Oceana is a suggestive trademark too. Besides its function as a restaurant, it is also the centre for culinary arts in Manila. It has a panoramic view of the bay and serves seafood cuisine. The trademark can be considered suggestive because it is connected with the seafood served in that restaurant which is originally from the sea.

Restaurants with arbitrary trademark

Four Seasons. As seen in the etymological analysis above, the common meaning of the phrase four seasons is related to time, four different periods in a year. It is a familiar term and can easily be found in the dictionary, but it is arbitrarily applied to the goods and services of the restaurant. The trademark of the four seasons can be interpreted as the availability of the restaurant to serve its customers throughout the seasons.

Vikings. The trademark of Vikings is arbitrary too because the term is commonly known as Scandinavian warriors but artfully used by the restaurant owners as the trademark. In ancient times, Viking explorers roamed the vast areas of Europe, Asia, and the North Atlantic to trade and raided the lands they beheld. They used their famous longships to travel as far east as Constantinople (Turkey today). This was the concept adopted by Vikings Buffet Restaurant as testified by Chico Santos, Marketing Officer of Vikings Restaurant, in an interview with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Hidalgo, 2012). Vikings Restaurant provides a seafood area (different sausages, fish, and lobster), a salad bar, a dim sum corner, and the sushi bar which offers a wide variety of Japanese sushi and makis. Besides the food, the restaurant offers a hotel ambience buffet-style of dining. Like the Vikings in ancient times, the restaurant has scoured the world with its best cuisine and made it available for each Filipino's delight.

Restaurants with fanciful trademark

Charaptor is considered a fanciful trademark, the strongest mark because it is a coined word. In the lexicography research, there was no existing word 'Charaptor' in the past. Charaptor is a new word that is coined to function as a trademark. Since the trademark name consists of two words 'charcoal' and 'raptor', it can be interpreted that food is cooked by the use of charcoal as its fuel. Raptor is known as an ancient animal that loved to eat meat. So, people who come to that restaurant will have much appetite to eat whatever food prepared by the restaurant. Charaptor is also a fanciful word because it is totally unknown in English or Filipino and completely out of the current common usage, unfamiliar to ordinary people.

Another fanciful trademark is **GEN**. The official website of Gen Restaurant (<http://genkoreanbbq.com>) provides succinct information about the concept and character of GEN which simply means 'The Beginning.' It offers the art of Korean barbeque by serving boundless menu options consisting of freshly prepared meats, seafood, and vegetables, to refreshing and traditional Korean ban-chan (side dishes). Other Korean cuisines, such as Garlic Calamari, Cajun Calamari Cajun Shrimp, Gen Beef Belly, and K.F.C (Korean Fried Chicken) are also served at this restaurant. Since GEN is associated with the character of 'The Beginning' which has no connection with food, then it can be regarded as a fanciful trademark.

Yakimix is also a fanciful trademark. It is a combination of two words, Japanese *yaki* which means grilled and an English word *mix*. True to its name, the restaurant serves various Japanese, Korean and Chinese grilled cuisine. The restaurant also has the raw meat and seafood section which serves, among other things, mussels, shrimp, slices of beef, bacon, and chicken that customers can grill at their table. Yakimix can be considered a fanciful trademark because it is a coined word.

Overall, in terms of the continuum of trademark strength, the data indicate that there is only one weak trademark in the corpus of this study, namely *Buffet 101*, because it is descriptive. As regards descriptive trademarks, Butters (2010) argue that descriptive words construct weak trademarks because they only "denote some major aspect of the product or service being offered to the public" (p. 358). But they can become legitimate trademarks if they have obtained significant meaning popularly known by the public. Another example of a descriptive trademark is 'Doublemint' because it contains two English words, *double* and *mint*. The latter refers to a kind of plant with aromatic leaves (Sadi-Makangila & Sabira, 2021).

The strongest trademarks in the study corpus are *Charaptor*, *Gen*, and *Yakimix* because they are considered fanciful. This finding may suggest that the majority of the owners of buffet restaurants in SM Mall of Asia creatively and appropriately chose the trademarks for their restaurants.

CONCLUSION

Trademarks are important in the business and can be costly when they are disputed in court, especially in the likelihood of confusion cases, in which linguists are often requested to give an analysis of the linguistic characteristic of the trademarks. The study reported in this paper was an attempt to do linguistic analysis on trademarks, particularly buffet restaurants in SM Mall of Asia, namely *Four Seasons*, *Vikings*, *Buffet 101*, *La Fiesta*, *Oceana*, *Gen*, *Charaptor*, *Yakimix*, and *Cabalen*.

The study analyzed some features of phonetics, morphology, lexicography, and semantics aspects of the trademarks and discovered the following linguistic characteristics: 1) lexicographically, the trademarks are mostly in English words derived from the Indo-European family of languages such as Latin, Greek, and French; 2) morphological features of the trademarks are noun phrase, affixation, and word-formation; 3) as regards phonetic dimensions, the trademarks have 1-3 syllables, and the majority of stress is in the second syllable; 4) semantically, most of the trademarks do not have synonyms and polysemy. In terms of trademark strength, the study discovered that *Buffet 101* is at level 2 (descriptive), and *Charaptor*, *Gen*, and *Yakimix* are at level 5 (fanciful).

The linguistic characteristics and trademark strength identified in this study can be beneficial for business people or owners of companies in the sense of helping them linguistically to produce trademarks with good quality. This paper advocates trademarks in the categories of arbitrary and fanciful, and through the process of word formation.

Finally, this paper recommends further research on trademarks from a linguistic perspective, including concerning dispute cases because there are still very few studies on this area, especially in the context of the Philippines, and Indonesia.

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