Research Article

Exploring Blending in the Morphological Construction of Native Brand Names in Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study investigates *blending* as a creative morphological strategy in brand name formation and examines the factors that motivate its use. Methodology: Drawing on Dressler's (1987) Natural Morphology Theory, it highlights both the natural and innovative dimensions of blending in brand naming. Following Mathew's 1974 model and Mattiello's (2013) model, the analysis applies two main classification systems: word class and morphological structure. The word class classification includes brand names formed from Igbo nouns and verbs, combinations of loanwords and Igbo terms, English nouns and verbs, pseudo-morphemes, adjectives, and translated forms. The morphological classification distinguishes among morphotactical blends (total and partial), morphophonological blends (overlapping and non-overlapping), and morphosemantic blends (attributive and coordinate). Data were collected from the Onitsha Relief Market, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Results: The analysis reveals that morphophonological blends are the most iconic among the identified types. Blending in the data demonstrates both creative and adaptive linguistic tendencies, reflecting natural morphological processes. The findings indicate that blending in brand naming functions primarily as a creative linguistic process rather than a productive one.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the use of blending is motivated by phonological/graphological, morphological, and semantic considerations, showcasing the dynamic interplay between linguistic innovation and communicative intent in brand creation.

1. Introduction

A brand name is among the most vital assets a business can possess. It not only identifies a product or service but also influences how it is perceived, recalled, and referenced by consumers. As Room (1994) notes, brand names serve both a functional and promotional role, conveying information and fostering positive associations. The process of crafting an effective brand name is not arbitrary; it is deeply rooted in linguistic creativity, particularly within the field of morphology, which examines how new words are formed and evolve.

Among the various word-formation processes, blending has emerged as a particularly dynamic and widely used technique in brand naming. This morphological process, defined by the fusion of parts from two or more words, has been described as both productive and creatively irregular (Panić, 2004). Here, productivity refers to the systematic and predictable application of morphological rules, while

creativity involves original and often unpredictable approaches.

Although blending is common in global brand naming, its role in indigenous markets, particularly in Nigeria, remains underexplored. This gap underlines the need for research that examines how blending operates within the Nigerian linguistic and commercial context. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the morphological processes underlying brand name formation in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on blending. It seeks to identify the linguistic strategies employed, uncover the motivations for their creation, and determine whether recurring structural patterns can be observed.

The theoretical foundation for this analysis is drawn from Dressler's (1987) Natural Morphology Theory. In addition, two classificatory frameworks are employed: Matthews' (1974) model for categorizing brand names by word class, and Mattiello's (2013) morphological classification of blends. In this study, the term *brand names* is used broadly to encompass both product and business names. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic creativity shapes commercial identity in the Nigerian market.

Blending is a morphological process that combines elements from two words to form a new word with fused meaning. Despite varying scholarly definitions, blends typically involve the shortening of source words, phonological overlap, and semantic fusion. Unlike regular morphological processes, blending is extra-grammatical: it lacks consistent rules, often yields unpredictable outcomes, and produces forms that are semantically opaque.

Mattiello (2013) offers a useful classification of blends, emphasizing both their structural and semantic variability. She identifies overlapping blends (e.g., *sexploitation ← sex + exploitation*), clipping blends (e.g., *brunch ← breakfast + lunch*), and hybrids, in which one source word remains intact (e.g., *workaholic ← work + alcoholic*). This typology illustrates that blending operates without fixed rules and allows for significant linguistic creativity.

Fradin (2000) further distinguishes blending from other morphological processes by highlighting three features: (1) blends rarely preserve the lexical integrity of their source words, (2) they lack consistent patterns of compositionality, and (3) they often appear as hapaxes, isolated lexical creations that do not form part of a productive morphological series.

Taken together, these perspectives underscore the complexity and irregularity of blending as a word-formation process. By examining its use in Nigerian brand naming, this study not only fills a notable research gap but also provides insights into the intersection of linguistic creativity and commercial identity.

2. Methodology

The data for this study were gathered through field visits to the Onitsha Relief Market in Anambra State, Nigeria, a major commercial hub in South-Eastern Nigeria. Where relevant, oral interviews with traders and consumers were conducted to supplement the data, and additional brand names were collected from advertising jingles promoting products and services. Thus, the study draws primarily on first-hand (primary) data, complemented by contextual sources.

Due to logistical constraints, the entire market could not be covered; therefore, a simple random sampling technique was employed. This approach ensured that each brand name encountered had an equal chance of inclusion, thereby minimizing researcher bias. From the data pool, 90 brand names exhibiting evidence of blending were selected for analysis.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive approach. In this study, the term *source words* refers to the lexical units combined in the blend, while *splinters* denote fragments of those words. For consistency, the terms *brand names* and *blends* are used interchangeably.

For classification, two models were applied: Matthews' (1974) framework for categorizing brand names according to word class, and Mattiello's (2013) typology for analyzing blends by morphological operation. These frameworks were chosen because they offer cross-linguistic breadth and flexibility, enabling their adaptation to Igbo brand naming.

In addition to descriptive analysis, this study adopts the Natural Morphology Theory (NMT) (Dressler, 1987) as its theoretical framework. NMT highlights the relationship between word structure and meaning, and explains how morphological processes are shaped by human cognitive and communicative capacities. Processes are considered "natural" when they are frequent, cross-linguistically widespread, diachronically stable, and easily acquired (Bailey, 2007). Dressler further distinguishes between system-independent (universal) and system-dependent (language-specific) patterns, arguing that universal preferences, such as iconicity, transparency, and biuniqueness, apply even to extra-grammatical processes like blending.

One key parameter is iconicity, whereby the form of a blend reflects its meaning (e.g., *smog ← smoke + fog*). Other parameters, such as morphotactic transparency

and perceptual salience, explain why some blends are more easily recognizable (*motel ← motor + hotel*) while others are opaque (*enshocklopedia ← encyclopedia + shock*). These irregularities illustrate why blending is regarded as an extra-grammatical but cognitively motivated process.

Taken together, NMT and Mattiello's typology provide complementary lenses for analyzing Igbo brand names. While Matthews' classification anchors them in traditional word classes, NMT explains their naturalness and markedness, and Mattiello highlights their structural variability. This combined approach allows the study to capture both the creative and systematic dimensions of blending in Nigerian brand naming.

3. Results

This section presents the blend forms identified from the collected data. A total of 90 blends, comprising both Igbo and foreign-origin terms used as indigenous brand names, are listed in Table 1. These blends are then categorized according to the classification frameworks of Matthew (1974) and Mattiello (2013). Matthew classifies blends based on the grammatical categories of the source words, while Mattiello focuses on their morphological structure and formation processes. To further analyze these blends, key principles from Natural Morphology Theory (NMT), such as iconicity, figure/ground distinction, and perceptual salience, are applied to explain how these blends function within the brand names. The compiled brand names are presented in Table 1.

From the above data, different types of brand names could be established on the basis of their categorial features as shown in section 3.2.

Table 1.
Indigenous Brand Names

S/N	First word	Second word	Brand names
1	Loyal	Milk	Loya Milk
2	Fresh	Yoghourt	Freshyo
3	Mama	Dish	Madish
4	Spice	City	Spicity
5	Cray	Fish	Crafish
6	Alive	Gold	Alivgold
7	Hannah	Jacinta	AnnJees
8	Precious	Nathaniel	PreNath
9	Sunday	Olamma	Sunla
10	Larry	John	LaJonic
11	Nutritious	Chocolate	Nutrichoco
12	Patrick	Ndubuisi	Patbuisi
13	Emmanuel	Gold	EmmaGold
14	Benneth	Catherine	Bencarty
15	Rosemary	Chukwuemeka	Rosemek
16	Ginika	Sunday	Ginisun
17	Peter	Priscilia	Petpriscy
18	Nutritious	Milk	Nutrimilk
19	Nutritious	Yoghurt	Nutriyo
20	Charles	Emeka	Charlesmek
21	Maxwell	Samuel	Maxsam
22	Kingsley	Kanayo	Kinkana
23	Nestle	Cafe	Nescafe
24	Vitallis	Nnaemeka	Vitameka
25	Helen	Ejike	Helejyke
26	Brother	Stephen	Broteph
27	Eric	Christian	Erichris
28	Ndubuisi	Wine	Nduwine
29	Sunday	Tex	Suntex
30	Okwuchukwu	Tex	Okwutex
31	Uchechukwu	Tex	Uchetex
32	Benneth	Camel	Bencamel
33	Olisaemeka	Frank	Olisfrank
34	Peter	Joseph	Pejoe
35	Joy	Friday	Joyday
36	Nathaniel	Chisom	Nathsom
37	Victor	Mmaduabuchi	Vicmmadu
38	Ugochukwu	Frank	Ugofrank
39	Emmanuel	Samuel	Emmasam
40	Fresh	Tea	Frestea
41	Vital	Milk	Vitamilk
42	Christopher	Chukwuemeka	Chrismeka
43	Paul	O	Paulo
44	Celestine	Ikeji	Celekeji
45	Sharp	Co	Sharpico

46	Fatigue	Gone	Fatigone
47	Donatus	Kingsley	Donkin
48	Jude	Soap	Jusoap
49	Nicholas	Mmasinachi	Nichochi
50	Joseph	Best	Jobest
51	Echezonachi	Co	Echeco
52	Nzubechi	Peanut	Nzunut
53	Arizonachi	Keys	Arikeys
54	Kelechi	Spices	Kespices
55	Kenedy	Don	Kendon
56	Ubasinachi	God	UbaGod
57	Simon	God	SimGod
58	Ifesinachi	Roseline	Rosife
59	Quick	Action	Kwaction
60	Rat	Kill	Rakill
61	Chijindu	Goodluk	Chigood
62	Osinachi	Mmadinachi	Osimma Ventures
63	Mama	Precious	Mama P foods
64	Spice	Up	Spicup
67	The	Fresh	D' fresh
68	Rat	Die	Radie
69	Christian	Chinaza	Chrizza
70	Family	Juliana	Familiana
71	Nnabuike	It	Nabit
72	Sylvester	Florence	Sylflora
73	Carbonated	Fresh	C-Fresh
74	One	Touch	Ontouch
75	Simple	- X	Simplex
79	Early	Morning	Earlimorn
80	Akachukwu	Chips	Akachip
81	Chibueze	Co	Ezeco
82	Emmanuel	Co	Emmaco
83	Kelechi	Sons	Kelesons
84	David	Son	Davison
85	Amaka	Special	Amaspecial
86	Kanayo	Onisha	Kanayosha
87	Innocent	Provision	Innoprovision
88	Oluchi	Store	Olistore
89	Faith	Soap	Fasoap
90	Mmasinachi	Chin-chin	Mmasichichin

3.2. Classification of blend words according to word class

Based on the collected data, the indigenous brand names fall into different categories, with some originating from a blend of English and Igbo morphology. In other instances, brand names are entirely derived from foreign words. This section aims to provide a descriptive overview of these categories. However, their detailed analysis is addressed within their classification into different word categories. Some brand names appear in the form of nouns, nominals, verbs, adjectives, and pseudo-morphemic-based blending forms. Consider the following groupings:

From the data, two brand names involving Igbo nominals are identified. The brand names *Osimma* and *Kanayosha* are coined from the merging and clipping of two personal names. In other words, these blend forms occur when splinters from two nouns are merged to give another new form of noun, either in the form of companies', products', or couples' business name (see 62 and 86 in Table 1). In particular, *Osimma* is formed from the personal names **Osi**nachi and **Mma**dinachi. The initial parts of

both names are merged to form a brand name. Kanayosha, as a brand name, is also formed from two source words **Kanayo** and *Oni**sha***. The first source word is fully retained while the second source word is clipped.

Brand names involving loan words and Igbo nominals appear to be the most common, with 30 of them attested in our data. A loanword is a term borrowed from another language and used without translation, often to express a concept or meaning that lacks a direct equivalent in English. In this context, the category includes words of Igbo origin as well as those borrowed from other languages, predominantly English. Owing to the close interaction between Igbo and English, brand creators often engage in code-mixing during the formation of brand names. Below are some examples:

	Loan word	Igbo nominal	Blend form
a	store	Oluchi	Olistore
b	sons	Kelechi	Kelesons
c	Sunday	Olamma	Sunola
d	Vitalis	Nnaemeka	Vitamek
e	Kingsley	Kanayo	Kinkana
f	Keys	Arizonachi	Arikeys

The third class comprises brand names that are

formed from the splinters of verbs and common nouns of English origin. Some of the resulting blends such as *rakill* and *radie* are brand names for products used in the pest control of rodents. Below are some examples:

	Noun	Verb	Blend
a	rat	kill	rakill
b	rat	die	radie
c	fatigue	gone	fatigone

Brand names that involve Igbo nominals and pseudo morphemes are characterized by blending in which Igbo personal names are clipped and subsequently combined with a pseudo morpheme in form of a suffix to form a new word. A Pseudo-morpheme (a quasi-morpheme) is a morpheme which has a differential and a distributional meaning but does not possess any lexical or functional meaning. Pseudo morphemes/suffixes commonly used in brand naming include: *-co*, as in *Echeco, Emmaco, Ezeco, -tex as in Uchetex, Okwutex*, and O as in *Paulo, Kendo* etc suggest an aura of business.

	Noun	Pseudo morpheme	Blend
a	Chibueze	-co	Ezeco
b	Uche	-tex	Uchetex
c	Okwuchukwu	-tex	Okwutex

Similarly, non Igbo personal names, particularly of English origin, are also clipped and combined with pseudo morphemes to form brand names as illustrated below:

	Noun	Pseudo morpheme	Blend
a	Emmanuel	-co	Emmaco
b	Sunday	-tex	Sunnytex
c	Kennedy	-o	Kendo

Lastly, a subset of brand names identified consists of noun+noun combination (see 95a-c), as well as adjective + noun splinters (see 96a-c). The source words are of English origin while the products named are of local origin. Below are some examples:

	First word (Noun)	Second word (Noun)	Blend (brand names)
a	spice	city	spicity
b	Jude	soap	jusoap
c	Larry	John	Lajonic
	First word (Adjective)	**Second word (Noun)**	**Blends (brand names)**
a	loyal	milk	Loyamilk
b	fresh	yoghourt	Freshyo
c	nutritious	chocolate	nutrichoco

3.3. Morphological classification and analysis of blended brand names

This study views blending as an unpredictable and irregular morphological process that involves a conscious coinage of a new word by fusing at least two source words which resulting in a partial loss of the orthographic and/or phonological material of either of the source words or both, or resulting in an overlap. In the Igbo language, as well as other languages, particularly English, both of which contribute to the brand names found within the study area, blending serves as a significant morphological process in brand naming (Table 2).

This section classifies blends into three main categories based on their morphological characteristics, following Mattiello's (2013) framework:

a. Morphotactical blends: (i) Total blends and (ii) Partial blends.

b. Morphophonological blends: (i) Overlapping blends and non-overlapping blends.

c. Morphosemantic blends: (i) Attributive blend and (ii) Coordinate blends

3.3.1. Morphotactical blends

Morphotactical blends comprises total and partial blends. Total blends are those in which all source words are reduced to splinters. Splinter is used in this work to describe "bits" from the truncated source words that appear in the blends.

3.3.1.1. Total blends

Total blends appear in different forms:
i) Where the initial part of one word is followed by the final part of another. Consider the examples in Table 3.

All the blends of this subtype are nouns. Most of the brand names that fall into this category are personal names of Igbo origin, code-mixed with loanwords, or personal names of foreign origin. These are good examples of hybridization (the act of combining two parts of words which etymologically belong to two separate languages to form a new word). This act of linguistic operation of hybridization in the Igbo parlance is indicative of the speakers' high level of code-switching and code-mixing.

Table 2.
Classification of blend words according to word categories

Different Classes of Brand Names	Token
Brand names involving Igbo nominals	2
Brand names involving loanwords and Igbo nominals	30
Brand names involving English verbs and nouns	4
Brand names involving Igbo nominal and pseudo-morpheme	4
Brand names involving loan words and pseudo-morpheme	6
Brand names involving loanwords (nouns)	26
Brand names involving adjectives and nouns	17

Table 3.
Brand name formation using word initial and word final parts of source words

	Blends	Constituents and process
97a.	Rosemeka	Rose(Mary) + (Chukwue) meka
b.	Chrizza	Chri(stian) + (China)za
c.	Familiana	Fami(ly) + (Ju)liana
d.	Chrismeka	Chris(topher) + (Chukwue)meka
e.	Celekeji	Cele(stine) + (I)keji
f.	Nichochi	Nicho(las) + (Mmasina)chi
g.	Nzunut	Nzu(bechi) + (Pea)nut
h.	Patbuisi	Pat(rick) + (Ndu)buisi
i.	Natsom	Nath(aniel) + (Chi)som

The first notable morphological operation is that all the source words undergo clipping either on the front or back before the splinters (the fragments of larger words used in the formation of new words) are merged. All the source words are personal names except in number (97g.) where a common noun, 'peanut' occurs as the second source word. The splinter '*meka*' at the end of *Rosemeka* and *Chrismeka* respectively, appears productive. The splinter suggests a productive mechanism in personal names for brand naming. In the two brand names, the clipping on the first source words occurs immediately after the first syllables are taken, while the clipping on the second source words occurs when the first two syllables, *chukwu (chu + kwu)*, have been deleted. Between *family* and *Juliana,* the (*ly*) and (*li*) overlapped resulting to the brand name, *Familiana*, a family product name.

As can be seen in Table 3, there is a reduction in the degree of iconicity of the source words (inputs) contextually, but the blend words are more iconic in that the fusion of the source words results in the fusion of meaning.

ii) Where both splinters used in brand name formation originate from the initial parts of source words. See some examples in Table 4.

Table 4.
Splinters used in brand name formation are initial parts of source words

	Blends	Constituents and Process
98a.	Hanjay	Han(nah) + Ja(cinta)
b.	Prenath	Pre(cious) + Nath(aniel)
c.	Sunola	Sun(day) + Ola(mma)
d.	Nutrichoco	Nutri(tious) + choco(late)
e.	Bencarty	Ben(neth) + Cathe(rine)
f.	Ginisun	Gini(ka) + Sun(day)
g.	Petpricy	Pet(er) + Presci(lia)
h.	Nutriyo	Nutritious + Yoghourt
i.	Maxsam	Max(well) + Sam(uel)
j.	Kinkana	Kin(gsley) + Kana(yo)
k.	Helejyk	Hel(en) + Ejik(e)
l.	Brosteph	Bro(ther) + Steph(en)
m.	Erichris	Eri(c) + Chris(tian)
n.	Sylflora	Syl(vester) + (Flor)ence
o.	Pejoe	Pe(ter) + Jo(seph)
p.	Vicmadu	Vic(tor) + Mmadu(abuchi)
q.	Emmasam	Emma(nuel) + Sam(uel)
r.	Donkin	Don(atus) + Kin(gsley)
s.	Chigood	Chi(jindu) + Good(luck)
t	Osimma	Osi(nachi)+ Mma(duabuchi)

From the above table, it is evident that the morphological operations of clipping and merging are involved in the formation of the blends such as in *Bencarty, Petpricy, Helejyk, Erichris, Sylflora*, and *Pejoe*. In *Bencarty*, (from *Benneth* and *Cathrine)*, the blending operations involve clipping off of *neth* and *rine* in both words respectively and subsequent suffixation of /y/ as also seen in *Sylflora* where /a/ was introduced. It should be noted that the suffixation of /y/ to *Cathy* and /a/ to *Flora* emanates from the shortened form of these names in isolation.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria where the data are obtained, Joe is to Joseph what Flora is to Florence. In Petpricy (from Peter and Prescilia), there is clipping followed by the substitution of /i/ with /y/, a form of transliteration. In Erichris (Eric + Christian), /c/ and /ch/ overlapped whereas in H*elejyk*, /e/ in *Helen* and /e/ in *Ejike* overlapped accordingly. There is also transliteration of /i/ in Ejike with /ai/ written as (y). The overlapping of /e/ in Helejyk could be because both Igbo and English have the vowel /e/. The blend word, *Osimma*, is a family business coined from names of identical twins, *Mma(dinachi)* and

Osi(nachi) to have (*Osimma* Ventures). Other blend forms in the above table follow this kind of clipping and merging without further morphological operations.

3.3.1.2. Partial blends

Partial blends are those blends in which only one source word is reduced. Partial blends occur in diverse ways in; the first source word is either followed a splinter (see Table 5), or preceded by a splinter (see Table 6). See the examples below:

All the blend forms above have their full words followed by splinters but in *Earlimorn*, there is a phonological transliteration occurring on *Early* where /y/ was transliterated to /i/. Another blend form with peculiar morphological process in this group is *Mama.p* (*Mama* + *Precious*), a full word with a period followed by an acronym /*p*/.

Table 5.
Source word before splinter

	Brand Names	Constituents and Process
99a.	Freshyo	Fresh + Yo(ghurt)
b.	Charlesmeka	Charles+ (E)meka
c.	Earlymorn	Early + Morn(ing)
d.	Joysday	Joy + (Fri)day
e.	Mama. P	Mama +P(recious)

Table 6.
Source word after splinter

	Brand names	Constituents and Process
100a.	Loyamilk	Loya(l) + Milk
b.	Madish	Ma(ma) + Dish
c.	Crafish	Cra(y) +Fish
d.	Alivgold	Aliv(e) +Gold
e.	Nduwine	Ndu(buisi) +Wine
f.	Akachips	Aka(chukwu) + Chips
g.	Ontouch	On(e) + Touch
h.	Ugofrank	Ugochukwu +Frank
i.	Frestea	Fres(h) + Tea
j.	Fatigone	Fati(gue) + Gone
k.	Jusoap	Ju(de) + Soap
l.	Jobest	Jo(seph) + Best
m.	Arikeys	Arizonachi+ Keys
n.	Kespices	Ke(lechi) + Spices
o.	Kwaction	Qu(ick) +Action
p.	Rakill	Ra(t) +Kill
q.	C-Fresh	C(arbonated) + Fresh
r.	Spicity	Spi(ces) + City

This specific category of partial blends is rich in complexity and subtle variations. From the table provided earlier, one less common blend example is *C-fresh*, which combines *carbonated* and *fresh*. Another notable blend in this group is *Madish*, derived from *Mama* and *Dish*. In the case of *Mama*, the blend may use either the first syllable "ma" or the second. Similarly, the term *Spicity* is a fusion of *spices* and *city*.

Most of the brand names in this category result from noun + noun combinations, with a few exceptions like *Loyamilk*, *Rakill*, and *Radie.* The name *Rakill* blends *rat* (a noun) with *kill* (a verb), indicating a rodenticide designed to exterminate rats. It is manufactured and distributed by Azubuike Business Enterprises. Likewise, *Radie* comes from *rat* and *die*, also referring to a rodent poison targeting rats and similar pests.Another unique brand name is *Alivgold*, which combines *alive* (an adjective) and *gold* (a noun). This brand is known for producing powder-based products. *Jobest* is another interesting case,

formed from the proper noun *Joseph* and the adjective *best*. It represents a trading company that deals in various soft drinks.

The word *Kwaction* blends *quick* (adjective) and *action* (noun). In this case, the blending process involved a form of loan translation, where the morpheme "qu" was translated into Igbo as "kw." When a word is borrowed into another language, it typically goes through a process of adaptation, where it's phonetic, morphological, and syntactic features are modified to align with the rules of the target language. Spelling changes are also common in borrowed words, particularly in Igbo, where English terms are often respelled to match Igbo phonology. *Kwaction* is an insecticide used against cockroaches, mosquitoes, wall geckos, centipedes, and other harmful crawling insects. It is produced and distributed by Ukachukwu Business Ventures.

The third type of partial blending is one in which the beginning of the source word is followed by a pseudo morpheme as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7.
Partial blend type-beginning of source word followed by a pseudo morpheme

S/N	Constituents and Process	Pseudo morpheme	Brand names
101a.	Okwu(chukwu)	Tex	Okwutex
b.	Uche(nna)	Tex	Uchetex
c.	(Chibu)eze	Co	Ezeco
d.	Eche(zonachi)	Co	Echeco
e.	Sun(day)	Tex	Sunnytex
f.	Emma(nuel)	Co	Emmaco
g.	Sharp	Co	Sharpico
h.	Paul	-O	Paulo
i.	Ken(nedy)	-O	Kendo
j.	Simple	-X	Simplex

As can be seen in Table 7, a range of pseudo-morphemes are used to complement root words in creating blends. These include groups like *Tex*, *Co*, *-O*, and *–X*. For example, *Echeco* is derived from *Echezonachi* with the addition of the pseudo-commercial suffix *-Co*. As mentioned earlier, this suffix is considered a commercial morpheme, often interpreted by scholars to imply a company or enterprise. *Echeco* is a business involved in selling groceries such as flour, semolina, rice, and related products. Similarly, *Sharpico* is a blend of *sharp* and *co*. This brand name represents an insecticide formulated to eliminate mosquitoes. The use of *sharp* in the name is deliberate, highlighting the product's quick-acting effect. Another brand, *Kendo*, is formed from *Kennedy* by clipping and appending the suffix –*O*. *Kendo* is a company known for selling waterproof materials, including nylon, leather, canvas, mesh, and cotton fabrics.

Comparing total blends with partial blends, partial blends are generally more iconic due to their morphotactic transparency. That is, they contain an entire word, which helps users easily identify the components of the blend. Examples include *Loyamilk* (from *loyal* and *milk*), *Freshyo* (from *fresh* and *yoghurt*), and *Crafish* (from *crayfish*).

However, there is high morphotactic opacity (i.e. difficulty in identifying the constituent parts) of some total blends, for example, *Nichochi* from (*Nicholas + Mmasinachi*) can be said to be coined from (*Nichloas + Chinasa, Chiamaka, Chinaza* etc), *Chigood* from (*Chijindu + Goodluck*) can be said to be a fusion of either (*Chiemerie, Chika, Chisom* etc *+ Goodness, Goodnews* etc), *Osimma* from (*Osinachi + Mmaduabuchi*) can be said to be a blend from combining any of these first words: *Osita, Osinadi, Osite* etc with any of the second words: *Olamma, Adamma*, etc. It can be observed that the most distinctive cases are ambiguous formations, where a single form can originate from multiple source words. In other words, these are marked (i.e., unique or unusual) formations in which the same blend word (signata) can be derived from two or more different source words (signans), or where multiple different source words could potentially produce the same blend word.

According to the principle of perceptual salience, both total and partial blends tend to favor the use of the initial and final segments of source words when forming new blends. This tendency is evident in the examples discussed across the various morphotactic categories. The principle also explains why certain blends shown in Example (1a-d) are more commonly accepted, while those in (2) are generally considered unacceptable.

(1) a. Ginisun ← Ginika + Sunday
b. Osimma ← Osinachi + Mmaduabuchi
c. Kinkana ← Kingsley + Kanayo
d. Maxsam ← Maxwell + Samuel,

But the end of certain words cannot be the beginning of a blend

(2) a. *uelwell ← Samuel + Maxwell
b. *sleyayo←Kingsley+Kanayo

3.3.2. Morphophonological blends

As the name suggests, this classification focuses on the interaction between morphological and phonological elements in the process of blending. Two categories of morphophonological blends are identified: the overlapping and non-overlapping blends.

3.3.2.1. Overlapping blends

This morphophonological process manifests in various forms, where the constituent parts of the blend share similarities in both spelling (graphically) and sound (phonologically), without any significant shortening. For example:

3.3. Overlapping blend

Blends	Constituents and Process	Constituent overlap
Spicity	Spi**ce** + **C**ity	/s/ written as ce/c

From Table 3.3, we can observe that all the source words are nouns. Additionally, the extent of constituent overlap does not appear to vary phonologically. The overlapping segments between the source words primarily consist of phonemes with similar characteristics, most notably, the /s/ sound. For instance, *spicity* is a blend formed from *spice* and *city*.

A similar type of blend involves overlap both graphically and phonologically, typically with at least one of the source words being shortened (Table 8).

3.3.2.2. Non overlapping blends

These are blends in which the constituent parts do not overlap either phonologically or graphically. They typically include brand names or coined terms that are formed without any shared segments between the source words. Examples of such blends are included, but not limited to, those presented in Table 9.

Table 8.
Overlapping blend with shortened source word

S/N	Blends	Constituents and Process	Constituent Overlapped
106a.	Mmasichi	Mmasina**chi** + **Chi**n-chin	/tʃi/ written as chi/
b.	Helejyk	Hel**en** + **E**jike	/e/ written as e
c.	Erichris	Eri**c** + **Ch**ris	/k/ written as c/ch
d.	Rosife	Ros**e**line + **I**fesinachi	/i/ written as e or i
e.	Familiana	Fami**ly** + Ju**li**ana	/li/ written as ly or li
f.	Kanayosha	Kanay**o** + **O**nisha	/ọ/ written as e

Table 9.
Non overlapping blends

S/N	First word	Second word	Blend
107a.	Benneth	Catherine	Bencarty
b.	Mama	Dish	Madish
c.	Cray	Fish	Crafish
d.	Hanna	Jacinta	Annjay
e.	Larry	John	Lajonic
f.	Peter	Priscilla	Petpriscy
g.	Maxwell	Samuel	Maxsam
h.	Brother	Stephen	Brosteph
i.	Benneth	Camel	Bencamel
j.	Sylvester	Florence	Sylflora

As shown in Table 9, some of the source words are shortened—unlike the example in Table 7 where the constituents overlap both graphically and phonologically without any shortening, are more marked (i.e., rarer) and more transparent in structure. In contrast, the blends in Table 8, which also involve both graphical and phonological overlap but include shortening of at least one source word, are somewhat less marked and less transparent. Meanwhile, the non-overlapping blends found in Table 9 are the least marked (more common) and the least transparent of all.

3.3.3. Morpho-semantic blends

This type of blend takes into account the semantic relationship between the source words. Within this category, blends are classified into attributive blends and coordinate blends.

Attributive blends resemble endocentric compounds, where one component functions as the head and the other as a modifier. Two subcategories can be identified within attributive blends: left-headed and right-headed attributive blends. Right-headed attributive blend is a subtype in which the head appears on the right, while the preceding element serves as the modifier. Consider the following examples:

In Table 10, the source words are nouns; the first set comprises proper nouns (personal names), while the second set includes common nouns. Morphosemantically, the proper nouns function as modifiers (grounds) to the common nouns (figures). This structure effectively forms a blend resembling an adjective + noun construction. Syntactically, the heads of these blends determine their word class. For instance, the brand name *Akachips* is a blend of *Akachukwu* (a personal name) and *chips,* indicating a type of chip. In (108c), the brand name *Madish* is derived from *Mama* (a personal name) and *dish*, referring to a type of dish. In example (108f), *Arikeys* combines *Arizonachi* (a personal name) and *keys*, denoting a business specializing in household keys. Lastly, in example (108g), the brand name *Kespices* involves a fusion of *Kelechi* (a personal name) and *spices,* representing a blend of spices used in local dishes like banga soup or *ofe-akwu.* These blends illustrate how personal names can be creatively combined with common nouns to form unique brand names, with the proper noun serving as a modifier to the common noun.

Table10
Right headed attributive blends

S/N	Blends	Constituent and process
108a.	Akachips	Aka(chukwu) + Chips
b.	Nzunut	Nzu(bechi) + (Pea)nuts
c.	Madish	Ma(ma) + Dish
d.	Nduwine	Ndu(buisi) + Wine
e.	Jusoap	Ju(de) + Soap
f.	Arikeys	Ari(zonachi) +Keys
g.	Kespices	Ke(lechi) + Spices

The second type of attributive blends is the left headed attributive blend. This category of blends resembles endocentric compounds, but with a reversed structure: the initial source word serves as the head, while the second word functions as its modifier. However, the data in this study do not support the existence of such brand names.

3.3.1. Coordinate blends

Coordinate blends, akin to coordinate compounds, are formed by combining two source words of equal importance. In these blends, both components contribute equally to the meaning of the new term. A substantial portion of the data in this study falls into this category. Examples of such blends are presented in the table below.

Table 11.
Coordinate blends

S/N	Blends/brand names	Constituents and process
109a.	Maxsam	Max(well) + Sam(uel)
b.	Kinkana	Kin(gsley) + Kana(yo)
c.	Helejyk	Hel(en) + Ejik(e)
d.	Brosteph	Bro(ther) + Steph(en)
e.	Erichris	Eri(c) + Chris(tian)
f.	Ugofrank	Ugo(chukwu) + Frank(lin)

As illustrated in Table 11, the blends in this category predominantly consist of personal names and function as heads of equal significance. When comparing attributive blends to coordinate blends, the former are more distinctive and exhibit higher morphotactic and morphosemantic transparency. For example, the components of the attributive blend *Akachips* (from "Akachukwu" and "chips") are more transparent than those of the coordinate blend *Lajonic* (from "Larry" and "John"), especially when tracing the blends back to their original source words. Coordinate blends contain two morphosemantic heads, which prevents a clear distinction between figure and ground. In contrast, attributive blends typically have a clearly identifiable head (or figure), usually positioned on the right.

3.4. Motivations for blending

Blending serves various purposes, often extending beyond mere utility. Algeo cited in Danks (2003, p. 2), observes that blends are created not only for their practical use but also for their cleverness.

This cleverness appeals not only to linguists but also to advertising executives and scriptwriters. The choice of blends in branding has a number of underlying motivations:

3.4.1. Phonological and graphological motivation

When parts of source words share phonemes or graphemes, it becomes easier to associate a blend with its source words and understand its meaning. This is why brand namers often merge source words that share similar phonemes. For example, in *Spicity* (Spice + City), the shared phoneme is /s/; in *Erichris* (Eric + Christian), /k/ is common; and in *Rosife* (*Roseline* + *Ifesinachi*), /i/ is shared.

Such brand names exhibit desirable characteristics like easy pronunciation, distinctiveness, memorability, positive connotations, and suggestiveness, all achieved through conscious phonological and graphological beautification. To enhance these characteristics, brand namers often blend names that are easy to pronounce, pleasing when read or heard, and pronounceable in only one way across all languages. Examples include *Fatigone, Echeco, Arikeys, Earlimorn, Sharpico, Kwaction, Nduwine, Jobest,* and *Joyday*.

Additionally, to help products and services stand out in the market, brand namers use graphemes that create new, eye-catching patterns. The use of specific phonological patterns in brand names is a strategic approach to enhance memorability and pronunciation, making brand names more rhythmic and easier to recall. This is why some brand names are coined following specific patterns. Some examples are presented below.

s/n	Blends/brand names	Constituents (Nominals/Adjectives and pseudo morphemes)
a	Okwutex	Okwuchukwu + Tex
b.	Uchetex	Uchenna + Tex
c.	Ezeco	Chibueze + Co
d.	Echeco	Echezonachi + Co
e.	Nutrichoco	Nutritious +Chocolate
f.	Nutrimilk	Nutritious + Milk
g.	Nutriyo	Nutritious + Yoghurt

3.4.2. Morphological motivation

The structural versatility observed in blends as brand names raises the question: how commercially successful are these blends? The most successful

brand names formed through blending are those that exhibit morphological transparency. For instance, the blend "beefish," derived from "beef" and "fish," is morphologically transparent because it clearly represents the product's content—fish. This transparency likely contributes to its commercial success, as consumers can easily infer the product's nature.

In scenarios where multiple companies market identical products under the same brand name, businesses often strive to distinguish themselves by crafting brand names that are concise, simple, visually appealing, and evoke positive associations. For example, in Onitsha's Relief Market, beverage companies have adopted names such as *Suntex, Brosteph,* and *Emmasam*.

Within the Christian cultural context of Onitsha, religious affiliations can significantly influence consumer perceptions. Many consumers associate Christian values with honesty, integrity, and fair pricing, believing that Christians are less likely to engage in deceitful practices or price inflation. Consequently, business owners often choose names that reflect Christian principles to foster trust and credibility among customers. For instance, he brand name *Suntex* combines "Sunday" and "Tex," signaling that the business owner is a Christian and was born on a Sunday. *Brosteph* merges "Brother" and "Stephen," invoking a sense of righteousness and honesty, as "Brother" suggests a godly and truthful character. *Emmasam* blends "Emmanuel" (meaning "God with us") and "Samuel," a prophet known for his integrity and service. These names not only reflect the owners' religious beliefs but also aim to build trust with customers by associating the businesses with qualities like honesty and reliability.

3.4.3. Semantic motivation

Semantic motivation requires semantic transparency of brand names. Such names should be easily identified, positive, not offensive, obscene, or negative; modern, understandable and memorable, for instance, the brand name *Nduwine* from (*Ndubuisi + Wine)* was coined to reflect the product that the individual or company sells or specializes on. Other examples include, *Kwaction, Nzunut, Rakill, Radie, Fatigon* etc. This motive for naming a brand stems from the description of benefit and functions of a product. This is called descriptive motive. The other motive under semantic transparency is evocative motive. This is the name that evokes a relevant vivid image like *Sharpico, Joyday, Earlimorn, Nutrimilk, Vitamilk, Frestea*, etc. Another motive for brand naming under semantic transparency is newness motive, for example *Bencarthy, Erichris, Paulo, Madish, Radie*, etc. Here, a brand name comes in a completely new word. A word is coined in such a way

so as to attract the attention of the customers. This is where a brand name is sometimes named after the founder's names as can be seen in most of the data, while some others are named after regions and landmark, indicating geographical location of production/sales or enterprise.

4. Discussion

The question that has persisted throughout scholarly discussions on blending is whether this process can be regarded as a productive morphological mechanism. Addressing this requires a clear understanding of both *productivity* and the operation of *blending* within the scope of morphological analysis. Productivity in morphology refers to a language's capacity to allow native speakers to generate new words in a rule-governed manner. The literature typically identifies three key prerequisites for productivity: frequency (Fleischer, 1975; Kastovsky, 1986), semantic coherence (Aronoff, 1976; Cutler, 1980), and the potential for the formation of new lexical items (Aronoff & Anshen, 1998; Bauer, 2001; Plag, 1999).

Although certain patterns and tendencies are observable in the formation of blends, as evidenced by the data examined, these patterns do not constitute *productive rules* in the strict morphological sense. Unlike derivation or compounding, blending lacks the predictability necessary for rule-governed formation. The analogical processes that guide blending are notably more flexible, admitting structures that would fall outside the boundaries of canonical morphology. As such, blending is often considered part of *extra-grammatical morphology* or *morphological creativity*.

These extra-grammatical processes operate less through deterministic rules and more through analogical reasoning, drawing from similarity to existing patterns rather than conforming to rigid generative norms. This flexibility, however, does not preclude systematic analysis of blends, nor does it diminish their linguistic significance, despite skepticism, particularly within the generative framework that sometimes views them as marginal or irregular. While Plag (2003, pp. 122-123) identifies a "surprising degree of regularity" in blending, even suggesting a structural template (AB + CD → AD) applicable to some English blends (e.g., *brunch* from *breakfast + lunch*), such a pattern holds primarily for prototypical blends and lacks cross-linguistic consistency. For example, overlapping blends like *slanguage* (from *slang + language*) involve the merging of internal segments (B and C), while intercalative blends like *slithy* (from *slimy + lithe*) resist any clear segmentation. These cases, as discussed by Gries (2004) and Kemmer (2003, illustrate the wide range of structural possibilities

that blending allows, further supporting its classification as a creative, yet only semi-predictable morphological process.

Although, there are some principles and regularities in the production of blends as some of our collected data suggest, these regularities are not productive rules, in the sense that, unlike derivational or compounding rules, they do not allow full prediction of a regular output. The analogical principle governing their formation is indeed more permissive than rules, admitting a variety of patterns which would be excluded from ordinary morphology, hence, the separation of blending from the module of morphological grammar. Extra-grammatical processes must be necessarily included in the realm of creativity, in that rather than being controlled by productive generative-like rules, they are only to some extent predictable by means of analogy, i.e., similarity to existing patterns. This does not mean, however, that blending forms cannot be systematically analyzed, or that they do not deserve the attention of linguists, as often claimed, especially within the generative approach to morphology. However true Plag's (2003, pp. 122-123) "surprising degree of regularity" is, which accounts for elaboration of a proper blending rule (AB + CD →AD) in some aspects of the English language, the blending rule appears to hold only for prototypical blends like (breakfast + lunch → brunch) and not language universal. For instance, in overlapping blends (e.g. *slanguage*) from slang and language, B and C merge into one, whereas in intercalative blends (e.g. slithy ← slimy + lithe) there is no clear-cut distinction among the various parts of the blend (Gries 2004; Kemmer, 2003).

Instead of asserting that blending is productive, it is more appropriate to say that it is creative. A morphological process is creative when it allows the native speaker to extend the language system in a motivated, but unpredictable (non-rule-governed) way. Hence, it can be defined as a lack of rule-governedness, generality, and predictability. Unlike productivity, which is a gradual phenomenon ranging from unproductive to fully productive (Plag, 1999, 11-12), creativity is an absolute phenomenon, with no intermediate degrees. That is, either a morphological formation is obtained creatively or it is not. However, the line between productive and creative processes is blurred and often difficult to draw, as when a rule is applied to an irregular base. Both productivity and creativity give rise to a large number of new words and thus bring about lexical innovation. Yet, whereas productivity coins new words by exploiting word-formation rules, creativity coins new words by considering both rules and analogical patterns, or, from a generative perspective, by changing the rules. As a result, words coined by

using word-formation rules are entirely predictable, while words exploiting analogical patterns are only partially so. Blending process should be excluded from the domain of productivity because (1) they are not rule-governed (Aronoff, 1976, p. 21), and (2) they have no morphological structure which allows morphosemantic interpretation (Mayerthaler, 1981, pp. 128-129). Furthermore, it fails to obey the above-mentioned criteria for productivity. With regard to semantic coherence, most extra-grammatical formations like blends do not change meaning with respect to their bases, but some acquire a connotative value, becoming more specialized or more informal than their regular alternative forms; others obtain new meanings in a rather irregular way.

The study categorized brand names into two main types: word-class classification and morphological classification. In the word class classification, various types of brand names were examined, including those involving Igbo nouns and verbs, combinations of loanwords and Igbo nouns, English verbs and nouns, Igbo nouns with pseudo-morphemes, English nouns with pseudo-morphemes, pure loanwords, combinations of adjectives and nouns, and loan translations. For morphological classification, the study focused on blending and identified three forms: morphotactical, morphophonological, and morphosemantic blends. Within morphotactical blends, total and partial blends were analyzed. Morpho-phonological blends were divided into overlapping and non-overlapping types, while morphosemantic blends included attributive and coordinate blends. Each blend type and its morphological structure and function in the language were extensively analyzed. The study aligns with Dressler's (1987) Natural Morphology Theory (NMT), which views blending as an extragrammatical and globally common linguistic process, frequently observed and utilized within specific languages. It also follows the classification frameworks of Matthews (1974) and Mattiello (2013), which support NMT.

The blending process reveals a contextual reduction in the iconicity of the original source words, whereas blend words tend to be more iconic due to the merging of both form and meaning. Among the three types of blends—morphotactical, morphophonological, and morphosemantic— morphophonological blends are considered the most iconic. In terms of the figure/ground parameter, only right-headed attributive blends in Igbo demonstrate a structure where one element functions as the head and the other as a modifier; no left-headed attributive blends are found in the language. When comparing attributive and coordinate blends, attributive blends are more marked and exhibit greater morphotactic and morphosemantic transparency. Regarding the principle of perceptual salience in blend formation,

the initial and final parts of source words are favored over their middle sections. The influence of the principle of perceptual salience is evident in the examples discussed across the different morphotactic categories (see 4.3.1).

The study also reveals that while certain principles and patterns exist in the formation of blends, as indicated by some of the data, these patterns do not function as productive rules. Unlike derivation or compounding, they do not consistently predict a regular output. The irregularity of blends is evident in highly marked examples where a single blend may be derived from multiple possible source forms. Therefore, instead of labeling blending as a productive process, the study argues it is a creative one. A morphological process is considered creative when it allows speakers to extend the language in a motivated yet unpredictable way, beyond rigid rules. In this regard, the creativity of blending is especially evident in brand names, many of which merge personal names with verbs, adjectives, prepositions, or pseudo-morphemes

It was found that various factors motivate the use of blending in brand naming, including phonological/graphological, morphological, and semantic considerations. Phonologically, brand creators often combine source words with similar sounds or spellings, aiming for names that are easy to pronounce, distinctive, memorable, positively connoted, suggestive, and original. Morphologically, they prioritize transparency—ensuring that consumers can readily grasp the meaning or function of the brand at first glance. Additionally, they favor names that are short, simple, visually appealing, and informative. Semantically, the goal is to produce brand names that are clearly descriptive, easily recognizable, modern, positive, understandable, memorable, and evocative, while avoiding any terms with offensive, obscene, or negative associations.

Overall, the study found that brand names are more likely to be adopted when they incorporate or are influenced by a socially valued language, such as English. Lexical blends with associations to high-status linguistic norms tend to gain wider acceptance compared to those based solely on the Igbo variety, which is rarely lexicalized. Additionally, blends are adopted when speakers recognize their practical value—such as filling lexical gaps or creating stylistic

impact. Due to frequent code-switching and code-mixing among Igbo speakers, sociolinguistic influences also shape branding strategies. For example, in the brand name *EmmyGod* (derived from *Chukwuemeka + God*), *Chukwuemeka* is partially translated and shortened, with a pun on *Emeka* forming *Emmy*. Other examples include *Nduwine* and *SimGod*. Borrowed words often undergo a process of adoption and adaptation, meaning they are adjusted to align with the phonetic, morphological, and syntactic norms of the target language—as demonstrated by *Kwaction*. The study thus defines blending as an irregular and unpredictable extragrammatical process involving the deliberate creation of a new word by combining at least two source words. This process typically leads to the partial loss or overlap of orthographic and/or phonological elements from the source words.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine blending as a morphological process in brand naming within the Igbo-speaking community of Onitsha. The focus was on exploring the creativity and underlying motivations for brand names found in Relief Market, using the framework of Natural Morphology Theory. The findings support the idea that language contact leads to mutual influence. In this context, the close interaction between English and Igbo has led brand creators to more frequently combine elements from both languages, rather than relying solely on Igbo. The study concludes that the patterns observed in the blending process reflect creative rather than strictly productive rules, and that the motivations behind blending span phonological/graphological, morphological, and semantic considerations.

While this study concentrated on blending as a key morphological strategy in brand naming, future research could explore additional morphological processes such as coinage, acronyms, reduplication, compounding, and clipping. Given that this work analyzed only a subset of blended forms from Onitsha's Relief Market, further research might conduct a contrastive analysis between these forms and those found in other languages, especially neighboring African languages and contact languages, to provide broader insights into brand naming practices across linguistic communities.

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