

NEOLOCALISM IN PRODUCT NAMES OF CZECH MICROBREWERIES: ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPLES AND TRENDS

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the analysis of the influence of neo-localism in the names of Czech microbreweries' products. Neolocalism is a phenomenon that, in the field of brand identity and marketing, is manifested in the orientation to local elements, cultural references and linguistic specificity. In an era of departure from the paradigm of globalization and strengthening of local markets, neolocalism plays a significant part in creative branding strategies. The aim of this paper is to verify whether the principles of neolocalism, demonstrated to be applied in the names of breweries themselves (Březinová, Linhartová, 2023), are also applied in the naming of individual products. Given the growing importance of microbreweries in regional development and tourism, the analysis of beer names becomes a relevant tool for understanding the marketing and cultural strategies of these producers. The study is based on the analysis of data collected in a research survey in 2024, which included more than 1,231 beer names from 250 microbreweries across the Czech Republic. The study uses content analysis complemented by linguistic and cultural interpretation. The key results show that 94% of the products assessed bear nominal or visual signs of local identity and cultural influences, including references to local geography, history, language and culture. Neolocalism thus represents a significant trend not only in the names of microbreweries but also in the names of their beer lines.

Keywords: Beer name, Geographical references, Historical motifs, Cultural and folklore motifs, Language elements (dialect, archaisms), References to local personalities

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the last fifteen years, the Czech Republic has seen a significant increase in the number of microbreweries, which have become not only an interesting element of beer culture, but also an important factor in regional development (Hána, Materna, & Hasman 2022). Along with this trend, the strategy of branding and naming their products is also developing; this plays a key role in branding and marketing communication. Microbreweries, which have established themselves as a strong segment of the Czech brewing industry after 2010, use culturally specific elements and linguistic forms to strengthen their identity. A study (Březinová, & Linhartová, 2023) found that 64% of Czech microbrewery names contain elements of neolocalism, such as references to local geography, history, slang or cultural figures.

The presented research and aim of this paper is to verify whether the principles of neolocalism are applied in the naming of individual products of microbrewery.

Neolocalism, defined as the deliberate reference to local history, culture and geography, is emerging as an important phenomenon in this field (Kincl et al., 2022; Eberts, 2014; Holtkamp et al, 2016). Shortridge (1996) defines neo-localism as a socio-cultural phenomenon that refers to a renewed emphasis on local values, community identity and cultural heritage in response to globalisation pressures, thus emphasising the importance of local identity, communal solidarity and ecological sustainability. Based on this initial definition of neolocalism, Shortridge is considered the founder of neolocalism. However, in his 1996 study *Keeping tabs on Kansas: Reflections on regionally based field study*, published in the *Journal of Cultural Geography*, he had not yet formulated the principles of neolocalism. These were at least partially formulated by William Flack (1997) in his study *American Microbreweries and Neolocalism: “Ale-ing” for a Sense of Place*, where Flack applies Shortridge’s concept to a specific practice (microbreweries) and elaborates on how neolocalism manifests itself (company name, local ingredients, symbols of place, community involvement). In Flack's work, we can already see the foundations of the principles of neolocalism, which are: the use of local resources, emphasizing a sense of place, and marketing through localism. These principles were further developed by Cavaliere, Ingram, and Slocum (2020) in their monograph *Neolocalism and Tourism: Understanding a Global Movement*, which synthesises and systematises the principles of neolocalism. The authors describe them as a conscious orientation toward place, strengthening community identity, sustainability, and the involvement of local actors. Talmage et al. (2020) defined the principles of neolocalism based on the name, location, and storytelling of breweries.

The importance of using neo-localism principles in product labeling is mainly due to the growing demand for authentic and locally sourced products (Mathews, & Patton, 2016; Cipollaro et al., 2021). In the area of product naming, there is a drive to create names that evoke a specific place, community or story, thereby promoting authenticity and brand credibility (Xu et al., 2024; Hartikainen, 2025;). This trend is particularly evident in the food and beverage sector (Eberts, 2014). Local products are perceived as higher quality, more proper and culturally richer (Riefler, 2020; Bryła, 2021; Fernández-Ferrín, 2020). Neolocalism in the food and beverage industry is associated with an upscale clientele and gentrification (Buratti, 2019). The beers from microbreweries, often produced in limited editions and distributed in the region, meet these requirements. The name of the beer thus becomes an essential tool for building product identity and a key to establishing an emotional relationship with the consumer, further

helping to differentiate microbrewery products from multinational brands and appealing to consumers seeking an authentic experience (Oba, Howe, & Fitzsimons 2025).

In brand marketing, the principles of neo-localism are manifested through an emphasis on cultural references in communication, the use of local symbols, language specificity and visual identity (Ikäheimo, 2021). In the case of beer as a culturally symbolic product, this approach is particularly relevant.

Approaches to neo-localism in marketing are often based on concepts such as place branding, place attachment and cultural capital. Microbreweries become not only producers of beer but also carriers of the cultural identity of the region. Neolocalism in product names can be implemented through lexical structures (e.g. slang, dialect), cultural references (e.g. historical figures, events) or geographical terms (names of places, rivers, mountains, etc.) (Chamizo, Pérez-Caballero, & Rodríguez de Mier, 2024).

Neo-localism is strongly connected with microbrewing, as microbreweries emerge in response to the need for local production with added cultural value. As Schnell and Reese (2014) state, the names of beers and breweries carry key features of the cultural landscape and serve as a means of communication between the producer and the community.

In the Czech Republic, with its rich beer tradition and diverse regional identity, neo-localism is a natural part of microbrewery branding. It is therefore appropriate to examine how neo-localism manifests itself not only in the naming of microbreweries themselves, but also in the naming of their products. This article examines how the principles of neolocalism are reflected in the names of microbrewery products, which are the main carriers of the identity of the brewery in question. We draw on extensive research that analyses beer names and categorises them based on the presence of neolocalistic elements. The paper presents a systematic typology of these names, discusses their function and impact on consumer perceptions, and contributes to a broader understanding of the role of neo-localism in contemporary food and beverage marketing.

DATA AND METHODS

The research focused on analysis of beer names. Data was obtained from publicly available databases in 2024 and supplemented by content analysis of microbrewery websites and field research. A total of 1,231 beer names from 250 microbreweries were analysed. Each name was analyzed for the presence of elements of neolocalism, which were then categorized according to predefined criteria. The qualitative analysis focused on the following criteria identified in the names of individual beers: geographical references, historical motifs, linguistic elements, cultural associations, folklore motifs, and names based on personalities. Furthermore, content

analysis was used to monitor the use of the brewery's name and logo on beer labels. Content analysis was carried out on the breweries' websites and traceable data on the labels of individual beer of breweries using contingency tables. The following segmentation criteria were also used: year of establishment of the brewery (since 2010, there has been a significant increase in the number of microbreweries, so the following groups were established: first group microbrewery founded before 2000, second 2001 to 2005, three 2006 to 2010, and then each year individually (2011/2012/2013, etc.), type of microbrewery (with taproom MR and without taproom MP) and regions of the Czech Republic where the brewery is located (D1 to D14: D1 Prague, D2 Central Bohemia Region, D3 South Bohemia Region, D4 South Moravia Region, etc.), and their influence on the selection of beer names from Czech microbreweries was examined.

The quantitative analysis of selected variables' influence on a beer's name has been conducted via regression analysis of panel data. The stationarity of variables plays an important role while working with panel data, as they are a combination of both time and cross-sectional dimensions. All of the variables (year of establishment, district, existence of the pub) have to be relatively stable around the mean value and time dispersion, otherwise estimation of the regression model, in the sense of a seeming regression, might be distorted. The testing is carried out via Dieckey Fuller's test of unit root (ADF test). In the next step, specific estimation techniques are chosen. It is necessary to take into account the character of the econometric model, the optimal character of provided estimates, the purpose of the estimated model, the difficulty of the method used both on quality and quantity of data and its robustness, but also the accessibility of adequate software and time and cost difficulty of the calculations.

Based on the estimated parameters of the econometric model, meaning both estimates of regression coefficients and estimates of stochastic parameters of the random parts' distribution, as well as observed values of the explanatory variables, the theoretical values of the variables are determined.

This leads to the solution of the econometric model (Baltagi, 2008). The most famous estimation procedure for determining numerical values of parameters of a single-equation linear regression model out of one selected observation of all its determinable parameters is the method of least squares.

Considering the specific nature of the data, there was a need to use tools which are compatible specifically with the mentioned data type. Estimation of panel data can be carried out in three ways: using pooled regression model (Pooled Regression), a model with fixed effects (Fixed Effects Model) or model with random effects (Random Effects Model) (Greene, 2003).

Pooled regression model is also labelled as comprehensive model, and its equation is as follows (for one explaining variable):

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta X_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

It is a standard regression model, where Y_{it} is the explained variable, X_{it} is explaining variable and letters α , β mark coefficients, or rather parameters of the model. The letter ϵ_{it} marks a random part. Judging from the names, it can be expected that the explaining variable is going to explain (affect) the dependent variable and coefficient β is going to determine the effect of variable X on Y . This comprehensive model is not suited for most panel data (Baltagi, 2008).

The fixed effects model is used for modelling individual effects of an artificial variable. While this regression has a wide variety of explaining variables, it is still a regression model. For this reason, all information about regression models and the aforementioned regression equation also apply here.

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_N D_{it}^{(N)} + \beta X_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

As opposed to the previous model, this one assumes a variety (year of establishment, district, existence of the pub) of cross-sectional units in absolute numbers, hence the need to create N different artificial variables for the fixed effects model, which are labelled as $D(j)$, where $j = 1, \dots, N$ (Baltagi, 2008; Green, 2003).

The random effects model does not use artificial variables (year of establishment, district, existence of the pub), but it does assume that individual effects are random quantities. Random effects model can be expressed similarly to the Individual effects model using the equations:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta X_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

where, however

$$\epsilon_{it} = v_i + u_{it}. \quad (4)$$

Random effects model can be expressed as a regression model; however, the random part of the regression is different. It is a combined random part that was created by combining a random element of a specific observation in a cross-sectional variable with a random element that is a feature of the cross-sectional variable (Baltagi, 2008; Green, 2003).

More formal recommendations regarding the suitability of each test are given by panel diagnostics, one of the most important ones being Hausman's test, which recommended to estimate the model using fixed effects for the chosen data sample.

Model of dependency of a beer's name was construed using the following equation:

$$\text{Name of the beer}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Year}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{TypMPMR}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{District}_{it} \quad (5)$$

Where:

I marks a specific state in the range of 1,...,n,

t marks a specific year in the range of 1,...,t,

Year is the year of establishment

Typ MP/ MR the type of brewery MP-microbrewery with taproom/MR –microbrewery without taproom

District expresses the area/region where brewery is located

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fact that the principles of neo-localism have an impact on microbrewery names has already been proven several times, including a 2016 study by Holktarm. In the Czech environment, the influence of neolocalism in the selection of microbrewery names was demonstrated by Březinová and Linhartová (2023). The aim of the present research was to analyse how the principles of neolocalism are reflected in the product names of Czech microbreweries. Each microbrewery has several product lines, making it interesting to observe whether the principle of neolocalism is also applied to the selection of the names of individual products and product lines.

The results showed that 87% of the names of the Czech microbrewery beers studied bear neo-localism features, with the most frequent, as shown in Tab. 1, being geographical references (35%), which include, for example, names of towns, villages, mountains or watercourses, thus reinforcing the link of the product to the place. Historical themes include reminders of battles, important events or historical figures, often with regional significance; these appear in 16 % of beer names. Cultural and folkloric themes follow, referencing local traditions, festivals or fairy-tale characters and are used in 14% of beer names. The linguistic component of neo-localism is manifested by the use of dialect expressions, archaisms, or puns typical of the given region, and was identified in 9% of beer names. The next group is made up of references to local notables who have played a significant cultural, economic, heroic or other role in the region, and this principle appears in 5 % of beer names. Only 13 % of beer names do not use elements of neolocalism. These results are consistent with the findings of Holtkamp et al. (2016), who confirmed in their study the use of locally rooted names and visual local imagery in the names and labels of individual beers. The highest average was achieved by local imagery in the names of individual beers in Texas, at almost 50%. However, his findings are much lower than ours.

-Schnell and Reese (2003) conducted an analysis of beer names and the visual image of labels, using the following variables: historical figures, local nature, folklore, and topography. The study confirmed that beer names and labels deliberately create a "sense of place." Other research also demonstrates the use of neolocalism principles in beer brands and labels. Eberts (2014) demonstrated place branding through local product names and visual symbols in beers from Canadian microbreweries. Ikäheimo (2021) points to storytelling and local elements (landscape, ingredients) in beer names and labels, which is consistent with our findings.

Taylor and DiPietro (2019) point to the fact that customers' perception of neolocalism in taprooms increases trust, satisfaction, and attachment to the place/brand and supports the marketing effects.

It has therefore been proven that the principles of neolocalism are used to a much greater extent in Czech breweries when naming microbrewery products (87%) than when finding names for the microbreweries themselves (65%) (Březinová & Lihartová, 2023). These different results may be due to the microbrewery owners' own egos (for example 14% of Czech microbreweries carry the name of their owners or founders) and other reasons (e.g., an attempt at exaggeration, humour), where 21% of Czech microbreweries carry a name that is not related to the owner's name, nor do they use the principles of neo-localism.

Table 1 The principles of neolocalism used in the names of Czech microbrewery beers.

Categories	Number of observations	Share (%)
Geographical references	428	35 %
Historical motifs	193	16 %
Cultural and folklore motifs	175	14 %
Linguistic elements (dialect, archaisms)	112	9 %
References to local personalities	64	5 %
Other types of neolocalism	97	8 %
No identifiable reference	162	13 %

Source: Authors' own work

In relation to the names of beers, the following variables were monitored: the year of establishment of the microbrewery, whether the microbrewery has its own establishment or not and the district in which the microbrewery operates. Of these selected variables, only the year of establishment was found to be relevant, where the fixed effects model identified the year of establishment of the microbrewery as a statistically significant variable, at a significance level of 0.05. However, the index of determination for this model is only 0.131960, and thus only 13% of the variability in the model is explained. The detailed results showed that the elements

of neolocalism are more often used for beer names from 2015 onwards. Thus, microbreweries established in 2015 and subsequent years have been shown to make more frequent use of the link to the place where the microbrewery operates in the names of their beers. This finding supports the move away from the globalisation paradigm and towards the principle of localism. No statistical significance was found for the other variables studied.

Table 2 Fixed effects model for the Name of the beer

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t-ratio</i>	<i>p-value</i>	
<i>const</i>	1,19313	0,134238	8,888	1,12e-017	** *
<i>Year</i>	0,0202366	0,00865920	2,337	0,0198	**
<i>TypMPMR</i>	0,0303929	0,0724962	0,4192	0,6752	
<i>District</i>	−0,00384483	0,00844942	−0,4550	0,6493	
<i>R2</i>	0,131960				
<i>Adjusted R2</i>	0,130880				
<i>Prob (F-statistic)</i>	0,154472				

Note: ***, **, and * represent statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Source: Authors' own work

The last monitored factor was the use of the microbrewery's name in the names of the beers and the use of the microbrewery's brand on the labels of the beers produced. The results (Tab. 3) show that 44% of the beers studied carry the name of the microbrewery and use its brand on their labels. Another 50% of the beer names contained local references, whether in the form of dialect expressions, names of historical figures or cultural symbols of the region. The remaining 6 % were names with no clear link to the brewery or the locality, using common beer metaphors or humour and exaggeration.

Table 3 Proportion of beer name categories, use of brewery name and logo on beer labels.

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Number of observations</i>	<i>Share (%)</i>
Brewery name + beer type	542	44 %
Local links	617	50 %
General beer metaphors	36	3 %
Other	36	3 %

Source: Authors' own work

The results confirm the strong influence of neo-localism on the product identity of Czech microbreweries. The higher proportion of culturally relevant names reflects the effort to communicate authenticity and distinctiveness in a competitive environment. From a linguistic point of view, creative wordplay, metaphors and intertextual references appear in the names. Culturally, the references to local history and folklore can be observed.

From a marketing point of view, it is an effective strategy for building a brand with a distinct identity, and it is also a tool for cultural reproduction and local identity.

Neolocalism is thus an important element in the marketing strategies of Czech microbreweries. The names of beers are not chosen randomly, but thoughtfully reflect the cultural, geographical and historical context of the place of production. These names not only help to create a unique brand identity but also contribute to the maintenance and development of regional awareness and cultural continuity.

The use of neo-localist elements in the names has several benefits. It increases the attractiveness of products for local consumers and tourists alike, promotes local patriotism, creates a story around the brand and increases its memorability. Consumers perceive beers named in this way as more authentic and of higher quality, and perceived quality plays an important role (Doležalová et al., 2016). This approach also enhances the value of the place from which the product originates. Local origin has an impact on customer preferences (Adams & Salois, 2010; Pícha & Skořepa, 2018) and also on their willingness to pay a higher price for local products (Carpio & Isengildina-Massana, 2009, Pícha et al., 2013).

From the point of view of regional development, it can be said that the neo-localist orientation of microbreweries contributes not only to the promotion of the region, but also to its economic stability - by creating jobs, cooperating with local suppliers and promoting tourism. This creates a natural link between business and the cultural identity of the area.

Our findings confirm the hypothesis that neo-localism is a key factor in naming beer products from Czech microbreweries. Contrary to expectations, neither region nor type of establishment was found to have a significant effect, suggesting that the motivation to use neolocal elements is primarily based on internal branding strategy rather than external factors. Most previous studies on neolocalism come from North America (Shortridge 1996; Flack 1997; Schnell & Reese 2003; Holtkamp et al. 2016; Talmage et al. 2020). Our Czech study thus represents the first systematic analysis of neolocalism in Central Europe. It shows that neolocalism is not only a reaction to American globalization and homogenization, but also part of the construction of local identity in the Central European cultural space.

The limitation of the study is that it focuses only on Czech breweries, without international comparison. Furthermore, other manifestations such as label design, marketing strategies, stories on websites, community involvement, and the use of local ingredients are not included in the examined factors of neolocalism.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of the names of beers from Czech microbreweries clearly confirm that neolocalism is a key element of the marketing communication of these entities. Of the 1,231 beer names examined, 87 % were clearly identified as having neo-localist features. This high proportion shows that neo-localism is not only a conscious branding strategy but also a culturally relevant way of communicating a product's identity to customers and the community.

The most commonly used principles of neo-localism included geographical references (35%), followed by historical motifs (16%) and cultural or folkloric elements (14%). A significant proportion of beers bore the brewery name or its brand directly on the label, indicating an emphasis on consistent brand identity and easy consumer identification. The results also showed that breweries founded after 2015 showed a greater tendency to use neo-local elements, which may be linked to the growing emphasis on authenticity and local story within the craft beer market.

Panel regression analysis confirmed that the year of brewery establishment is statistically significant in influencing the likelihood of using neo-localist elements in beer names. Other variables, such as region of operation or type of establishment (with vs. without an establishment), had no demonstrable effect. This result suggests that the neo-localist approach is the result of strategic decisions by specific entrepreneurs rather than a response to external factors.

The study concludes that the use of neo-localism is an effective marketing tool that strengthens the cultural value of the product, promotes consumer loyalty and contributes to sustainable regional development. Although the positive impact is predominant, the risks of over-commercialisation of cultural elements and loss of authenticity if these symbols are used mechanically or purposefully should also be noted.

The findings of the research show that neolocalism is an important element in the marketing communication of Czech microbreweries, and its use in the names of beer products is significantly higher (87%) than in the names of breweries themselves (65%). This fact opens space for the systematic implementation of neolocalistic elements in the creation of product

portfolios. Breweries should actively seek out the cultural, linguistic and geographical motifs of their region and use them as an inspirational framework for the creation of new products. Collaboration with regional historians, ethnographers or linguists is also appropriate to ensure authenticity and cultural relevance.

From a marketing perspective, it is advisable to extend the neo-localist naming to other elements of brand communication, such as label design, brewery visual identity, website stories and social media content. This strengthens not only the emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, but also the perception of authenticity, which is key to the craft market. The research results also show that newer breweries (founded after 2015) exhibit a higher level of neo-localism, suggesting a transformation in the business mindset towards sustainable and culturally anchored branding.

At the level of regional policy and tourism development, the results can be used to support brands with a high degree of local identity through grant schemes, marketing alliances and destination management. Microbreweries that actively cultivate a neo-local identity can be drawn into cultural-tourist projects such as beer trails, gastrofestivals or regional quality labels. The implementation of the research findings thus goes beyond the level of individual enterprises and has the potential to contribute structurally to the development of the cultural and economic capital of the region.

The study significantly expands current knowledge about the role of neo-localism in product marketing in the food industry and brings a specific view of Czech microbreweries as cultural actors. While previous research has focused primarily on the branding of breweries as institutions. With over 1,200 beer names analysed, the study provides a robust data base for the typology of neo-local elements in the Czech environment.

The study confirms that neolocalism is not just a cultural framework with no practical function but a functional brand management tool with an impact on product differentiation, brand authenticity and the relationship with the place of origin. This approach also anchors microbreweries as carriers of cultural memory and regional identity, which strengthens their legitimacy in the eyes of consumers.

The theoretical contribution of our study lies, among other things, in demonstrating that neolocalism is not merely an "American phenomenon" but a universal mechanism of identity, marketing, and cultural reproduction. It also shows how entrepreneurs can use neolocalism to build their brands. Furthermore, it places neolocalism in the broader framework of theories of local identity, cultural capital, and place marketing, and provides new evidence that product names are becoming a tool for communicating a "sense of place." The research links linguistic

structures (dialect, archaisms, puns) with cultural references and marketing strategy, demonstrating the interdisciplinary potential of the study of neolocalism. The use of the existing classification of neolocalist categories (geographical references, historical motifs, cultural and folkloric elements, linguistic elements, references to personalities) provides a verified methodological structure for examining cultural identity in branding.

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