

channelUNO

trends and other interesting things from around the world



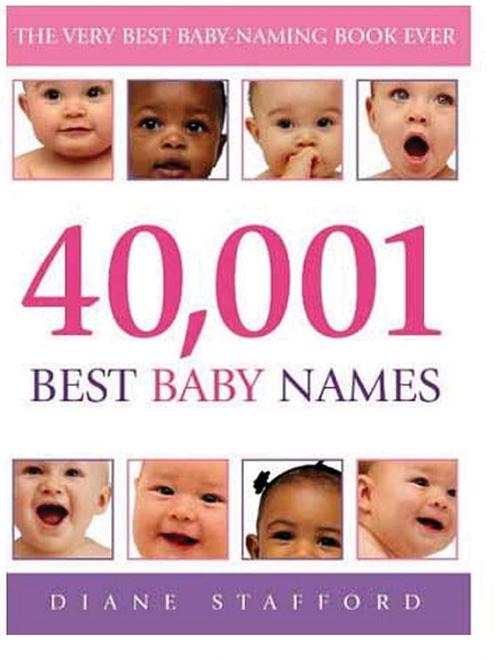
If you are a regular viewer of Channel UNO you may notice that this quarters issue appears to bear a striking similarity to the last one, in which we commented on the nature of names and the hazards that brands can face when they migrate across regions, cultures and languages. In this issue we wanted to go back to the source rather than the destination. Where do names come from and why, if they are only there for us to define one thing against another, does it seem to have such an impact on our perception of it.



“Forget the Goldfish, he’s gone..., and you pronounce it RAY MAN!”

As children we all wished at some time or another that our name was cooler or more dynamic or that our parents had used a little more to thought so that our initials didn’t create a dodgy acronym as in the case of Simon O’Donnell, a boy from my Primary School years who although when seven was of slight build, filled out to be one big SO’D, with a personality to match.

To those of you who are parents or who are in the pre-parental stage, you will probably have whiled away at least a few hours sitting with your partner, thumbing your way through the numerous



reference books on children's names and toyed with the Godlike power of naming your new addition. My wife had an interesting approach in that she liked to add the title of Doctor to the front just to set some early standards and then consider what branch of medicine the name felt right within. We considered numerous options along the way and pored over the pages of the 'A-Z of names', an invaluable source of amusement where we contemplated with a dark regard, names both odd and bizarre. Then there were the names, which we couldn't use because they had already been claimed and soiled by old enemies, whacko's, or other family members.

Of People and Places

Names are what allow us to define our world and our place in it. If something is nameless it hasn't really been born, its not tangible, we can describe it in longhand but even then it has no hard edges, its blurred and unresolved. The act of naming also has enormous significance, in some cases we surround them with ritual and ceremony, at other times they immortalise the namer or are used to honour the famous. Every city in the world is dotted with references to the great and the good. There are also fashions in naming and certain periods in history have shown a marked lack of imagination when it comes to naming some of the world's most spectacular features; the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Sandy Desert, the Great Ocean Road. The word in the US was Grand, as in Grand Canyon, Grand Rapids, Grand Teton's.

When the where is what you are

Naming also plays a very important role in the birth of a brand or a new product. This has been heightened of late by a number of relatively new factors. This year saw the ratification of a new agreement between the European Union and Australia which means that geographic or providential descriptors will only be able to be used by those who can realistically be said to operate within that nation or



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territory. This has been the case with Champagne for a number of years and the market has duly compensated by the using 'sparkling' instead. Food products like cheese have used the geographical references to denote different textures, flavours and production methods. This also raises the question as to when a name becomes so definitive and in such common usage that it no longer speaks just for one brand but for the whole category; Hoover is the traditional example but more recently Google has joined the ranks.

When names turn Ugg'ly

There was also the recent courtroom battle over Ugg boots. The real story here is about name ownership and the registering of an iconic Australian product; the Ugg boot. The ironic twist in the story is that an Australian



The Ugg Boot
- so ugly we can only show you one

registered the name in Australia; the name was then sold to the Decker Outdoor Corporation in the US. Decker, with the law behind them, then went on to enforce the ownership by issuing legal notice to all users to stop using the term in promoting or describing their Ugg boots. Enter Mr & Mrs McDougall, owners of Uggs-n-Rugs, forced with financial ruin they had little option but to take Deckers to court, arguing that 'Ugg' is a generic term and therefore should never have been registered. In the end, after countless legal arguments and crippling legal costs the battling couple won out and forced Decker to remove the trademark for 'Ugg' within Australia.

Decker were fighting over their property and the title that made their product distinct, by allowing others to use it they would have been compliant in diluting this distinction. The fact in this case that the term was found to be generic in Australia emphasises the need to carefully consider, with all the regard of a parent for a child, all that is in a name.

What's it to me?

The public definition of a brand is a complex matter, one where the name is really just the flag on top of the hill of projected ideals, real experiences, visual associations, trend curves and almost countless other variables which all can have varying degrees of impact on how we

each perceive that product, so although the flag may remain constant the hill has all the stability and consistency of jelly or 'Jell-O'.

The creation of a name in itself is not that difficult, grab a scrabble bag and pull together the first utterable combination and you're there. The problem with this rather fateful and chaotic approach is that the association with the word, the phonetic sound or even its shape may start people off in the wrong direction and as such, means you'll need to work that much harder for that much longer to get them back on track. It also needs to be pointed out that there are numerous global brands out there that, out of the context of their product or market, have completely meaningless names, such as; 'Adidas' which comes from the name of the founder Adolf (Adi) Dassler, the Bic Corporation, the pen company was named after one of its founders, Marcel Bich.

adidas®



He dropped the final 'h' as phonetically it didn't sound too good asking for one of those 'bitch' pens.

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Both these names are obviously derived from their founders. The definition of these brands has come about mostly through longevity; they've been there so long and been so enduringly constant that we as consumers have succumbed. The odd discrepancy in this is that Bic then went on to successfully sell disposable razors, a product, which by anyone's standards bears little resemblance to a pen, except that both were cheap, decently made, highly functional and highly disposable. However, there are companies out there, that although we may think them to be steeped in heritage have just been very clever with that scrabble bag. 'Häagen Dasz', has all the airs of a company that has been around since Beethoven was a lad but was



actually the invention of a savvy New Yorker, Reuben Mattus, way, way back at the dawn of time or to be precise 1961. An ice cream maker from the Bronx, Reuben wanted a new name for his premium ice cream and got creative with a few umlauts and bizarre letter combinations. The result was a product that had a lot more cachet and therefore was able to justify a premium price point.

Clark Kent or Superman?

The use of a name to target a particular market is nothing new and is at the forefront of any new brand launch. It has also been used to reposition companies, such as the case of the large Korean chaebol 'Lucky Goldstar'. A profitable



chemical company which after a national push to modernise became better known for electronic products. These products were initially entry level and competed purely on price, the subsequent change of name in 1995 was purposefully done to reposition the brand alongside their more premium contemporaries, such as Sony. Today the brand, on the back of good design and product reliability, is now in the range of consideration with the likes of Sony and JVC. The re-positioning allowed them to step outside of their Chinese Restaurant name tag and become more global. I was also very dubious about the 'Lucky' part of the name, which never instilled a great deal of faith in the products reliability.

Today, LG, although created from the initials of its previous self, doesn't stand for anything. LG do tend to use it to support their various taglines, such as 'Life's Good, and 'Love the Game', the latter being adopted for their ongoing sports sponsorship. →

Future-proofing anything relies on trying to manage the knowns and second guessing the unknowns. In the case of large brands there is always the strength in knowing that you can resort to advertising to nudge perception. It also used to be the case that smaller brands had more localised markets but far more companies are looking for growth by looking further afield and with this there comes the risk that the names that may have relied on heritage or culture to give resonance now have to start with just the name.

As part of our work on brand or product development we start with the name and the definition, if the name is part of that development then we create and agree the definition with the client. The distillation of this into a name is a complex process and one which we approach from numerous angles. Its probably easiest to compare it to the psychological tool of word association overlaid on the principles of semiotics as the shape, strength,

placement and colour can then be used to create contrast or reinforce meaning. The early shortlist of names is then cross checked against a list of registered names and the business/market category to confirm availability, in the case of foreign markets we would also do a local market audit and name search to avoid any cultural mismatch.

As always its been a pleasure putting this together but before you all go I'd like to finish off with a song that might just sum up my feelings on this, or at least give you something to sing round the barbecue. So, in the words of Johnny Cash*:

*My daddy left home when I was three
And he didn't leave much to ma and me
Just this old guitar and an empty bottle of booze.
Now, I don't blame him cause he run and hid
But the meanest thing that he ever did
Was before he left, he went and named me "Sue."*

*Well, he must o' thought that is quite a joke
And it got a lot of laughs from a' lots of folk,
It seems I had to fight my whole life through.
Some gal would giggle and I'd get red
And some guy'd laugh and I'd bust his head,
I tell ya, life ain't easy for a boy named "Sue."*

*Well, I grew up quick and I grew up mean,
My fist got hard and my wits got keen,
I'd roam from town to town to hide my shame.
But I made a vow to the moon and stars
That I'd search the honky-tonks and bars
And kill that man who gave me that awful name.*

Till next time, y'all take care now y'hear.

This is our channel for airing opinions; a few of ours, our International Design Partnership friends and if you've got some, yours. Our aim is to start a few fires, kick a few tired ideas into shape and stir up a healthy debate on what we see around us.

If you want to join in the debate or introduce a friend to the channel then you can mail us at the newsdesk@uno.net.au



brandstorm

Finding the right name is a challenging process, the right name flips all the switches, links seamlessly with shapes and colours, creates a vocal landmark for recognition, leaves a buzz on the lips, demands to be said and can speak volumes on the nature of a brand.

UNO approach this challenge from multiple angles, our 'brandstorm' creates the definition for the name and profile of the target audience. Naming is to create a distillation of the values and emotions that are to be

projected. Our approach is uniquely integrated within all our disciplines as we understand that the name is flavoured, accented and supported by its interaction with all the supplementary elements; logotypes, pack shapes, colour palettes etc.

If you would like to know more about 'brandstorm' or require a specific naming solution then click the 'brandstorm' button and stand back!



* Boy Named Sue - All lyrics are the property of their respective authors, artists and labels.