



A GOOD NAME

The importance of a strong and distinctive brand name should never be underestimated. A good choice can ensure your product is memorable and differentiated, help with positioning or the communication of key messages and USPs, and ensure trademark rights and linguistic and cultural attractiveness in every market of interest. A bad choice can lead to expensive changes further down the line. Easily said, but how should one go about creating a successful brand name? And what can be done to ensure it is relevant and attractive at home and abroad?

Linguistic and cultural acceptability abroad

The internet is the single biggest reason for the need for internationally acceptable brand names. Increasingly confident consumers are more willing to research and purchase goods through the internet. It therefore makes good business sense for brand names to be immediately impactful, accessible, clear and globally relevant.

Other contributory factors include the liberation of export markets and a rise in international travel.

Brand naming is complex enough in a single country. Finding an international name is best done with the help of specialists who have the experience and resources to ensure it is appropriate in every market. So how is it done?

Nomen has more than 20 years experience in creating, researching and legally verifying brand names for multi-national companies such as Phillips, Proctor & Gamble and Armani. We have an established network of branches and associates who undertake international acceptability checks on names.

Names that export well are easy to pronounce and have positive associations that are within the requirements of the company brief.

Pronunciation tests are carried out to eliminate any obvious problems and checks are then made on similar existing words or trademarks in other countries.

Any spontaneous associations with the name are captured and then analysed to see if there are any negative connotations. The suitability of the name against the rest of the sector brands in the relevant countries is then checked.

Trademark acceptability

A new brand name must also be searched in the trademark register of each country in which it will be used. These searches are to ensure that the name you want to use is not already owned by someone else. A trademark agent will check in the classes of goods or services relevant to the new product or service. However, these trade mark classes, as they're called, are notoriously broad, covering a wide range of things. So if you're launching a new mobile phone, you'll have to check against all personal electronic devices, including computers, televisions and personal stereos. As you can imagine, this means the trade mark classes are extremely crowded and finding a name that no-one else has already taken is both a science and an art!

Once you've found a name that is legally "free", you must then register it. This involves making an application in the trademarks classes of each of the countries of interest. Once this application is made, you are free to use the name as a trademark.

Checking a name for export is a time consuming process and can take anything from three months to two years. The majority of this time is usually taken up by trademark searches, making it vital to think ahead and plan sound strategies.

You should bear in mind the following points when developing a name for overseas markets:

- Plan ahead – consider all export markets, now and in the future
- Invest – put time and resources into finding a name from the start

With existing brands either test the current name for export possibilities or create a new name to cater for all international needs.

Giving a product the wrong name, or one that does not translate well in other countries can be expensive, embarrassing and time-consuming so it is vital to get it right first time. Here are some examples of names that somehow got launched!

- Krapp toilet paper (Sweden)
- Kunto aluminium foil (Finland)
- Bonka coffee (Spain)

What type of name?

Names derive from a variety of sources. Internationality has created a trend toward names with Latin & Greek origins. Many European languages are derived from either Greek or Latin, making these names easier to transfer across continents.

Acronyms and 'coined' names incorporating elements from one or more words are often useful tools for avoiding translation difficulties, as they are less likely to have meanings in other languages. Well-known brand names using these formulas for success are:

- IKEA – an acronym of founder Ingvar Kampard’s name his farm Elmtaryd and his village Agunnaryd.
- 7-UP – refers to the seven flavours of the drink
- Persil – a combination of the product’s two main ingredients, percarbonate and silicate
- ADIDAS – taken directly from founder Adi Dassler’s name
- Hovis - from the Latin Hominus Vis, ‘Strength of man’.

Creating a new word is a particularly effective strategy for minimising trademark difficulties. These are much more distinctive than brand names that describe (e.g. PowerBook) or words taken straight from the dictionary (e.g. Yahoo, Orange), and therefore they are more likely to be available as trademarks. There is no doubt that it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain a trademark in today’s saturated market.

Creating the perfect name

New names should not be too constrictive and should allow for possible future strategic developments of the brand. It is also important for a name to fit in with the company’s existing branding strategy. For example, a common theme through a whole range of product names.

Naming experts generate a range of potential names for a new product or service. Nomen uses a network of creatives and consultants to generate names through brainstorming groups and creative sessions. The name is chosen following feedback sessions with the client, legal checks and linguistic screening

The creation of a successful name requires focused and experienced professionals – however, the following checklist is a good list of dos and don’ts for the client at the start of the process.

- Think imaginatively and outside of limiting constraints
- Carry out careful trademark checks

- Make sure the branding strategy is durable
- Undertake extensive market research
- Gain inspiration and ideas from any existing names used by the company
- Test the name's appropriateness for foreign markets
- Leave plenty of time to get everything done.

Above all remember that a brand name is an investment. Over time it becomes better known and reminds customers of any communications activities such as an advertising campaign. Other elements of a brand may change but a good name will last forever.