
Brand Name and Brand Image - An Ever Lasting Relationship

Dr. S. GAYATHRY
M.Com., M.Phil., B.Ed., Ph.D
Assistant Professor
SRM B School
SRM University
Vadapalani, Chennai

Abstract:

Brands with strong images are able to influence customers' choices and command a premium in the marketplace. A brand name is the foundation of a brand's image. Developing a name for a company or product or service is crucial in brand building. It's not a process to take lightly, nor is it wise to rush. While the image associated with a brand name can be built with advertising over time, brand managers realize that a carefully created and chosen name can bring inherent and immediate value to the brand. The process companies use to create, evaluate and select new brand names is described in this paper. Results of the study indicate the fact that brand names are critical to the success of a new company or a product or a service. Consumer and industrial goods companies place similar emphasis on the brand naming task, and a detailed and systematic process is used in the creation of the brand names.

Key words: Brand Building, Brand Image, Brand Naming

"Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind."
Walter Landor

1.1. Introduction

Until 1890s very few manufacturers emphasized brand names. There was no consistent advertising. Most of the manufacturers operated in local markets, and often sold unbranded products to the retailers. The retailers, in turn, sold them unbranded or under the store name (Schutte 1969). Today, manufacturers sell “national brands.” Advertising outlay for the nation is increasing at a faster rate. The market is expanding beyond national boundaries, and brands are quickly becoming the most valuable assets for some companies. The pace of information and technology diffusion today has made it easier to imitate a product. As a result, it is more difficult to maintain a competitive edge on performance attributes alone. In a survey conducted by the advertising agency BBDO, brand parity was higher for products such as paper towels and dry soup (which emphasize performance benefits) than for products such as cigarettes, coffee, and beer, for which imagery was the norm (BBDO Worldwide, 1988). Brand image sells. Brands with stronger images are able to influence customers’ choices and command a premium. The brand name is an essential part of the brand image, the anchor for its positioning. While the image associated with a brand name can be built with advertising and over time, brand managers realize that a carefully created and chosen name can bring inherent strength to the brand. Creating an effective brand name, however, is a challenging task. Brand names help identify the product, but more importantly take on their own meaning and presence because they represent a rich configuration of symbols and meanings that are embodied by products (Levy, 1978). Thus, a new brand name should not only appeal to the customers, it should have other desirable properties depending on the nature of the market. These may include connotations associated with the brand name, relevance to the product, memorability, and the ability of the brand name to offer a distinctive image over competing products.

1.2. Brand Name and Brand Image- A Prelude

A brand name is the identity of a specific product, service, or business. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name. A brand can take many forms, including a name, sign, symbol, color combination or slogan. Some people distinguish the psychological aspect, brand associations like thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and so on that become linked to the brand. The experiential aspect consists of the sum of all points of contact with the brand and is known as the brand experience. The psychological aspect, sometimes referred to as the brand image, is a symbolic construct created within the minds of people, consisting of all the information and expectations associated with a product, service or the companies providing them. Effective brand names build a connection between the brand personalities as it is perceived by the target audience and the actual product/service. The brand name should be conceptually on target with the product/service. Furthermore, the brand name should be on target with the brand demographic. Typically, sustainable brand names are easy to remember, transcend trends and have positive connotations. Brand identity is fundamental to consumer recognition and symbolizes the brand's differentiation from competitors. Brand identity is what the owner wants to communicate to its potential consumers. However, over time, a product's brand identity may acquire, gaining new attributes from consumer perspective but not necessarily from the marketing communications an owner percolates to targeted consumers. Therefore, brand associations become handy to check the consumer's perception of the brand.

2.1. Review of Literature

An attempt has been made to review case studies and the work of individual researchers, magazines, journals, articles pertaining to brand building and creating brand names. A wide range of academic literature on branding has been reviewed for the purpose of this study.

Collins (1977) discussed two basic naming strategies. The first strategy is to choose a name and establish it in the consumers' mind through repetition. This strategy is referred to as the "Juliet Principle" after Shakespeare's line "that which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." The second strategy is referred to as the "Joyce Principle." This strategy involves choosing a name that has the desirable phonetic symbolism.

Vanden Bergh et al (1987) provided an extensive taxonomy of linguistic and phonetic symbolism that may be employed in creating an attractive name. They found that semantic appositeness (fit of name with object) and initial plosives (names starting with b, c, d, g, k, p, q, t) were most extensively used in the top 200 brand names listed in the annual Marketing and Media Decisions from 1971 to 1985. But this is not conclusive evidence for the efficacy of symbolism embodied in brand names.

Pavia et al (1993) showed that even seemingly nonsensical alpha-numeric names convey certain ideas to consumers. Alpha-numeric names are more acceptable for technical products, than for non-technical products. For products that are more suited to alpha-numeric names, combinations with the letter Z are more acceptable than those with letter A. Also, aurally hard letters and numbers are more acceptable than aurally sibilant words and numbers. The studies discussed so far focused on establishing the efficacy of brand names in influencing brand evaluation by consumers.

Heath et al (1990) extended this further. They used meaningful names developed using a priori theory. Their study

demonstrated that consonant hardness and vowel pitch in the names increased perceptions of “hardness” in paper towel and cleanser brands.

3.1. Statement of the Problem

It is difficult to build a strong brand in today's environment. The brand builder can be inhibited by substantial pressures and barriers, both internal and external. One key to successful brand building is to understand how to develop brand names, to know what the brand stands for, and how to most effectively express brand identity. While several authors have suggested how companies should create brand names and recommended the desirable characteristics of brand names, there is limited research on how companies actually create new brand names. This is the focus of the present investigation.

4.1. Need for the Study

The present day markets are flooded with numerous brands. The competition is intense and the amount of active brands in the same segment is increasing. In such times it becomes difficult for the manufacturers and marketers to ensure the brand visibility. This is a common problem with every brand. Realizing the importance of brand name and brand image in the current scenario, the paper attempts to study the impact of brand name in building the brand image.

5.1. Objective of the Study

- To analyze the importance of suitable brand names in increasing the brand visibility
- To evaluate the impact of brand name in building the brand image
- To suggest suitable propositions for selecting a right brand name

6.1. Methodology

Information for the study was collected from both Primary and Secondary sources.

6.1.1. Primary Data was collected by interviewing various brand managers

6.1.2. Secondary Data was collected from various online sources, books and journals.

6.1.3. Limitation of the Study

- The study has been conducted only in Chennai
- The period of study is limited

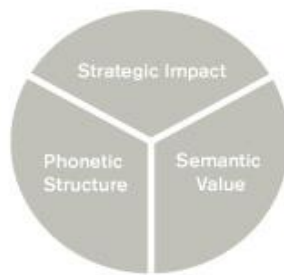
7.1. Implications of the Study

The most crucial factor in selecting a brand name is to solve the dilemma between choosing a descriptive name or a unique word. There are different schools of thought on this. Some people fall squarely in the unique made-up name camp and others think descriptive is best. Descriptive business names do not require as much work to convey what the business does. That is especially useful for small local businesses without much of an advertising budget. Unique names attract the attention of the consumers, but may not convey the desired meaning or message about the product or service. Choosing the right brand name is a key part of a company branding strategy and the right brand name can make a real difference. The views expressed by brand managers of small, medium and big brands are summarized below:

7.1.1. Brand Name Selection

Once the teams create a broad range of potential solutions, the following three distinct vantage points should be taken into consideration.

Figure 7.1.1. Vantage Points in Brand Name Selection



Strategic Impact: This is the ability of a new name to get attention (within a category), generate interest, and deliver a new message.

Semantic Value: Too often a name is selected simply by its literal meaning or rejected because of a few personal associations. In the selection process, one should look beyond the literal meaning of the word. The other possible association that the name might suggest should also be considered.

Phonetic Structure: The name should be analysed whether it sounds natural or artificial. It should also be tested for its pleasing and rhythmic quality. The name should strike a balance between vowels and consonants. Finally, the brand name should be examined for the delivery of the right tone.

7.1.2. Strategies for Choosing a Brand Name

A new business undertaking has to take vital decisions before starting the operations. Decisions relating to perfect location, effective marketing, proper pricing strategies and most importantly deciding on a great, memorable and identifiable brand name.

The following factors have to be taken into consideration to generate a memorable, meaningful and unique brand name.

Acronyms/Abbreviations- Some companies like to use long, descriptive names to identify who they are and what they do. Acronyms are often used to make longer names friendlier and easier to remember. In most cases, the customers are the ones who start using the acronym for their own convenience. This method works particularly well if the name of the company is long whose first letters of each word form a brand new, pronounceable word. (Eg- Ikea - Ingvar Kamprad Elmtaryd Agunnaryd, (Sedish), UPS – United Parcel Service, MTV – Music Television)

Conjoined- A conjoined brand name occurs when a brand name contains more than one word to form something new. Typically, the combined name gives two different meanings or understanding to the new. It is a good alternative to an acronym and still is very clear and inventive. (Eg- FedEx, PayPal, Coca-Cola, MicroSoft)

Descriptive- Descriptive brand names can effectively communicate what a brand does. On the downside, it can result in the customers finding the competitors. The danger in choosing descriptive names is that the business sets itself up for confusion with competitors. For example a wine merchant will need to be free to use the word ‘wine merchant’ otherwise it could not engage in its business activity. (Eg- Pizza Hut, Architectural Digest, Chick Punch)

Invented and Playful- Invented names can be quite fun and interesting to come up with. They can be playful, weird, and catchy. While descriptive brand names make it easy for potential customers to find the competitors, invented make it difficult for them to find the company’s brand. They demand much more marketing because they are harder to remember and less descriptive. (Eg- Google, Yahoo. Pepsi)

Founder or Origin- Some companies create their brand names around their own name. While this method is easily trademarkable, it can create the same problem as invented names. If the founder uses his or her name as the brand name, it becomes much more inviting and friendly. It puts a face to a company. (Eg-Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan, Pothys)

7.1.3. Principles of Choosing a Brand Name

Businesses choosing their brand names should consider the following principles while deciding on the brand name viz.,

Table 7.1.3. Principles of Choosing a Brand Name

S.No	Principles
1	Functionality
2	Memorability
3	Simplicity

Functionality- This describes the nature of the business by its name. When the business is choosing a name based on the intended function it will carry out, then it is said that the business is named based on the functionality. Functionality works very well for branding, as the name already speaks for itself. The major advantage of choosing a functional brand name for the business, product or service is its self-descriptive nature. (Eg-Facebook, YouTube, Hotmail)

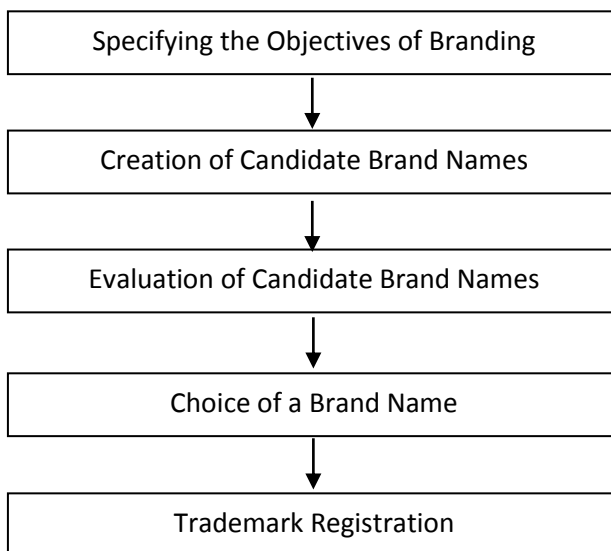
Memorability- The central objective of this second approach to choosing a brand name for the business, product or service is stickiness. The business wants the brand name to be stuck in the minds of the people. This is a deliberate and creative combination of words. Such brand names will attract attention; stir up the curiosity and interest of the target market. The major advantage of choosing a memorable brand name is its uniqueness. Nothing differentiates a business, product or service better than a brand name that is uniquely theirs. (Eg-Nokia, Sony, Kodak)

Simplicity- The third approach to choosing a brand name for the business, product or service is simplicity. The brand name should not be difficult to pronounce and spell. The more complex it is, the more easily forgettable it becomes. So whether it is a functional brand name or a memorable one, it should be both simple to spell and pronounce. Simplicity is the underlying principle that ties up other two approaches of choosing a brand name. (Eg- Apple, Amazon, Ford)

7.1.4. Naming Process

Since most companies do not have formalized guidelines for the creation of brand names, this paper provides a rich description of the task to undertake, the methods available, and the evaluation criteria to consider. In this regard, managers should:

Figure 7.1.4. The Brand Naming Process



1. Set out clear objectives for the naming process. This can be drawn from the marketing strategy, especially the positioning statement for the product.
2. Create a reasonably long list of candidate brand names. This will ensure a good pool of alternatives. Traditional methods of

brainstorming and individual creative thinking are considered most useful and an excellent starting point.

3. Conduct a thorough evaluation of the candidate names. It is important to consider each criteria deemed appropriate for the product being introduced. Managers should plan carefully to ensure a complete and objective evaluation of the names.

4. Systematically apply the objectives and criteria choosing the final brand name.

5. Choose four to five names for submission to the registration. While some of the names may be unacceptable specified in the earlier steps in Patent and Trademark Office for registration, the problem does not seem to be as severe as suggested by several recent books and articles. Therefore, managers are well-advised to try to reflect the “marketing” objectives in the names without unduly constraining themselves with trademark concerns.

8.1. Conclusion

In today’s world of heavy marketing, different companies are selling similar products but the main difference is their brand name which is printed on the packaging of the product and thus easy to recognize. Customer’s loyalty largely depends on the brand of the company. Most loyal customers always purchase the product with the brand name of the company as they are brand conscious. They know very well about the cost and quality of the product as the brand image has been made clear in their minds, so the brand is their actual satisfaction. Brand name should be chosen very carefully because the image and identity of the product and the producer largely depends on the brand name. Lots of research and information is required when choosing brand name for the product. Creation of appropriate brand names is considered by managers to be very important. Most marketing managers feel that brand names on their own, without any advertising support can influence the sales.

Specifically, they rate brand names to be significantly more important in influencing the success of the product than packaging or inducing trial. Interestingly, this view is held by consumer and industrial companies who believe that the brand name creation task is critical to the success of new products.

REFERENCES

- BBDO Worldwide. "Focus: A World of Brand Parity." New York: BBDO, 1988.
- Collins, Leslie. "A Name to Conjure With." *European Journal of Marketing* 11, 5 (1977): 340- 363.
- Heath, Timothy B., Subimal Chatterjee, and Karen Russo France. "Using the Phonemes of Brand Names to Symbolize Brand Attributes." *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association* (1990): 3 8-42.
- Levy, Sidney J. *Marketplace Behavior -- It's Meaning for Management*. New York: AMACOM, 1978.
- Pavia, Teresa and Janeen A. Costa. "The Winning Number: Consumer Perceptions of Alpha- Numeric Brand Names." *Journal of Marketing* 57, 3 (1993): 85-98.
- Schutte, Thomas F. "The Semantics of Branding." *Journal of Marketing* 33, April (1969): 5-1 1.
- Vanden Bergh, Bruce, Keith Adler, and Lauren Oliver. "Linguistic Distinction among Top Brand Names." *Journal of Advertising Research* 24, August/September (1987): 39-44.