

The Essential Study on Brand Naming for International Marketing

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Content	1	Purpose of this Report
	2	Conceptual Provisions regarding International Trademarks and Brands
	3	Trademarks and Brands
	4	Good and Bad Naming Practices in regard to Marketing Strategy
	5	Naming Principles for the International Market
	6	Summary

1 Purpose of this Report

It goes without saying that the naming of international trademarks is of great importance. A negative proof of this importance may be seen in the frequent losses incurred when trademarks for domestic use are translated literally or when ill-conceived inspirations lead directly to names, which, in the context of other cultures, often incur instant disrepute. Infracton of other's trademark rights is also not uncommon. In this report, then, in the hope of coordinating research done by the Japanese Business English Society, I will limit myself to the problem of a favorable approach to international brand naming, from a linguistics approach as well as from a marketing strategy approach.

2 Conceptual Provisions regarding International Trademarks and Brands

2-1 International trademarks in regard to legal terminology

2-1-1 In regard to its legal basis, this terminology is used when discussing those trademark provisions contained in the International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.⁽¹⁾ This may be considered the 'international public law' aspect.

2-1-2 International Private Law

From the standpoint of domestic law, when a case containing a public relations (liasion) element is under consideration, in order to denote the public aspect of that case the adjective 'international' is used.⁽²⁾

2-1-3 Commercial Contracts Aspect

Regarding commercial contract usage as well as other aspects of business parlance, and regarding the usage in the Management and Commercial Science

fields, when the trademark in question is in use in more than one country it is spoken of as an 'international trademark'.

3 Trademarks and Brands

3-1 Registered Trademarks

Based on the Trademark Law, the trademark is an industrial property right. In Japanese law, the trademark is defined in section 2-1 of the Trademark Law. However, as listed, the provisions of this conception have often been the object of debate in the legal profession as being at variance with the "common social concept" of the trademark⁽³⁾.

3-2 Non-registered Trademark

Even though a trademark is not registered, as a trademark it still exists. In other words, even though it is not registered it may serve the purposes of a trademark; however, inconvenience appears when seeking legal recourse to its infraction.

3-3 Brands

In Japan as well as in international trade a 'brand' name is that appellation of a product purposing to denote local characteristics of its place of manufacture, or to signify the grade of a product, e. g., in the crude rubber transaction, R. S. S. Singapore No. 1 ; also, the famous brandy Napoleon.

3-4 Confusion between Trademarks and Brand Names

Today, brand names, including trademarks, are used as well to signify specific products. Confusion arises from the fact that in some cases brand names may be registered as trademarks, and, likewise, trademarks may be used in advertising in much the same way as brand names. However, as the purpose of this report is to examine forms and effectiveness of product naming from a linguistics standpoint, rather than maintaining exact distinctions between 'brand' and 'trademark' I will

include both under the broad heading of 'naming'.

4 Good and Bad Naming Practices in regard to Marketing Strategy

Essentially, as a product' name is its face, in sales strategy the naming has long been considered the classic means of identification. In cases where that 'face' is an unreasonable or unpleasant visage, high quality products that should sell—do not. Therefore, due consideration of naming might well be regarded a fundamental sales operation.

4-1 Evaluation Standard in Naming

Should we apply to the problem of naming the criteria generally used for evaluation in Quality Control, attention must be paid to the following : 1) brevity 2) subtlety 3) ease in remembering 4) ease in reading 5) ease in pronouncing 6) ease in adaptation 7) no unpleasant connotations 8) suitability for foreign markets 9) lettering considerations 10) registrability 11) appropriateness to product concept 12) suitability to advertisement 13) distinctiveness from other trademarks.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that thought be given to characteristics useful as grounds in countering possible infractions of one's trademark by others.

4-2 Examples of Poor Naming

Some examples are as follows.

① ASCO

ASCO is the classic example of a facile naming idea uncritically accepted. It was adopted, when a new company started under the name of Aishin Kōgyō, on the merging of the Toyota affiliated Aichi Industries and Shinkawa industries. The letters 'CO', for company, were added to the respective initials, giving the final form ASCO. Unfortunately, in Spanish and Portuguese 'asco' may mean nausea,

⁽⁴⁾
disgust, or repulsion. For an automobile accessories' brand it is obvious that such an image is undesirable.

② NOVA

NOVA is an example of a naming which, though popular in its domestic market, proved unacceptable on introduction into a different linguistic area. A compact car which proved popular in the U. S. and Canada, NOVA failed to establish itself in Spanish speaking South America. Although 'nova' in proper Spanish may only signify 'quiet', in popular use it is also used for 'doesn't move'. Although an ironic coincidence, people would not buy the car so named. Ford, realizing this, soon changed the naming in the Spanish speaking countries.

③ NATIONAL

NATIONAL is often cited as an example of a domestic brand involved in trademark infringement in its export market. Although Matsushita Electric sells its products under the brand name 'National' in Japan, it was refused permission to do so in the United States. As NATIONAL was the registered trademark of a subsidiary of U. S. Steel, Matsushita was thereby forced to change names, choosing 'Panasonic'. Unaware of the split involved, it is said that Americans, on touring the Akihabara electronics mecca in Tokyo, are surprised at what they consider blatant imitations of Panasonic Products that they find under the name of National.

Usage of 'NATIONAL' as a trademark, even when it has not already been registered by another company, may also meet difficulties in that it is liable to be misunderstood as being established or operated by the local government. Reflecting such, in Spain, though allowed, government permission is required for its use.

④ Miscellaneous Examples

Nakabayashi Paper Company's expandable album folder 'Clit', had to be rejected for its resemblance to clitoris.

The special promotion by a U. S. airline company at its outlet in Brazil of a 'Rendezvous Lounge' also failed for a lack of linguistic familiarity. In Portuguese, 'rendezvous lounge' denotes specifically a rental room for lovers' trysts. The instances of similar *faux pas* in brand and trademark naming are too numerous to list.

4-3 Examples of Favorable Naming

In addition to fulfilling the criteria mentioned above, good naming must also consider three other attributes of a name: the semantic image, the phonetic image, and the graphic image. Although many examples exist I will offer only two here.

① SONY

'SONY' is widely considered a supreme example of good naming. On top of meeting the other criteria, it is a word of few letters, easy to pronounce, to read, and to remember.

② MANNA

This trademark of the Morinaga Confectionary Company's cookie product also meets the above mentioned criteria for good naming. 'MANNA' is known in literature as the God-given food that saved the Israelites when Moses led them out of Egypt. Linguistically a Hebrew word, as it may nevertheless be seen in English, Greek, Latin, and Italian languages, it is applicable as a brand name over a wide linguistic area. Even in Japanese it finds a phonetic resemblance to that first food an infant may encounter: 'mamma'.

5 Naming Principles for the International Market

At the absolute minimum, the following three points must obtain consideration when choosing a name for the international market:

5-1 Three Main Factors of Trademark

The first point is to fulfill the three main functions of the trade mark :

- 1) the designation of the manufacturer or producer
- 2) quality guarantee
- 3) advertising function

In regard to these three functions of the trade mark there are many books on the subject; see especially Mr. Fukuichi Asada's '*Kokusai Torihiki Keiyaku*' (chapter 6, II and III).

5-2 Brand and Image Attributes

Although this problem was touched on in 4-3 in the discussion of the three major attributes involved in product naming, here in regard to international naming I would like to supplement those with the following: 1) the image of the trademark's conception 2) the phonetic image 3) the physical image 4) the phono-semantic image 5) the grapho-semantic image.

5-3 Synthesizing Words from Broad-based International Language Families

Of the world's population of 4 billion, 1.5 billion use European languages primarily and another 1.2 billion, or approximately half of the remainder, use European languages as their official language. This amounts to seventy percent of the world's population having a groundwork for understanding at least one of the European languages. 'European' languages designate, linguistically, the larger part of the Indo-European language family, including the following: the Indo-Iranian group, the Baltic group, the Slavic group, the German group, the Celtic group, the Italian group, Greek, Albanian, Armenian, Tocala⁽⁶⁾ (extinct), Hittite (extinct).

However, with the exception of the Indo-Iran language groups, the trend at present is the borrowing and assimilation of words of Greek and Latin origin. Also, while reinforcing this trend, as English is fast becoming the international language of our day the result is a possibility of communication with 70% of the world's

population via Anglo-Greco-Roman(AGR)stylized naming. In short, it is clear that AGR naming is the most effective international tool of communication.

Furthermore, with the addition of Chinese characters to a brand name it is possible to expand market access to include the 'Kanji countries' of Japan, Korea, China, as well as Chinese merchants around the world. A successful example of this is 是可是樂(Coca-Cola).

5-3-1 Naming in the Anglo-Greco-Roman Style(AGR naming)

Generally, the use of the three above mentioned languages in product naming is referred to as 'AGR naming'⁽⁷⁾. Attributes of AGR naming include 1)its wide geographic and demographic use 2)its especial ease in being understood throughout the western world 3)its ease in being remembered 4)and especially its ease in creating an affective familiarity. With the Anglo-Saxon world at the same time, as being the beneficiaries as well as the extenders of the Greco-Roman inheritance, the accessibility to the historical background is also on advantage.

5-3-2 From Natural to Artificial Language

The case is often seen where common or proper nouns are appropriated, transformed, or have new prefixes or suffixes attached to form new, 'artificial', words.

① Place names

TAIHEIZAN(sake's brand), BOSTON(Toshiba House name), ASCOT(English racehorse track and well known place name), etc.

② Personal names

- Johnson and Johnson(wax trademark)

Johnson is a most popular name in the West, and as it may be seen in several languages(as follows)is of wide applicability :

Holland ······Jansen

Germany······Jansen

Denmark.....Johannsen

SwedenJohannsen

NorwayJohannsen

- ANNE(feminine sanitary article's brand)from Anne Frank

③ Names of bird, animal, flower, grass

- HELLEN(electric light accessories' brand)meaning torch(= torchlight)in Greek language
- LEONE(car brand meaning lion)from Italian

④ Greek god and goddess

- Zeus, Nike, Eros, etc.

⑤ Roman god and goddess

- Jupiter, Victoria, Cupid, Diana, Apollo, etc.

⑥ Use of compounds

BRIDGESTONE(tire company trademark), formed, via translation and re-ordering, from a Japanese personal name: ishi = stone, bashi = bridge.

ST. MERRY FUJIYAMA (shoes brand)combines an English name with original Japanese surname.

5-3-3 Artificial Words by Way of New Additions to Roots

This is the process of, after obtaining a definite root, adding alterations such as a letter at the end, a suffix, or a prefix to create an artificial word.

- coron(meaning crown)plus 'et'= CORONET(name of automobile by American Dodge Company)
- concord(harmony)plus 'e'= CONCORDE(name of supersonic jet)
- pan-a-color = PANACOLOR(Matsushita Electric's television trademark)
- bell-i-na = BELLINA(NEC's telephone trademark)

5-3-4 Grammatical Manipulation in the Creation of Artificial Words

This is the method by which the manipulation of prefixes and suffixes is used to create words giving characteristic images to products.

For example :

① -ar [a suffix expressing a group] Ex. : Tube-ar-y → TUBARY

TUBARY is the trademark for a combination tube product.

② -et, ett, el, ell, it, in [by the addition of these diminutives as suffixes, products may be given images such as small, petit, cute, and playful] Ex. : Coron-et=CORONET (a name for automobile)

5-3-5 Use of a language's image

① Italian is used when appealing to the young or when trying to create an image of strength. For examples :

- NINA (trademark for feminine sanitary products)
- NINA RICCI (names for perfume, dress wear)
- PARCO (originally meaning 'park', is used as name for a department store in the Seibu chain.)

② When appealing to the female market for accessories, perfume, etc., French is often used, as in 'Fleur' (flower).

③ For machines, tools, etc., German is used to connote strength and durability. Ex. : SONDA (amplifying machine trademark)

6 Summary

Although for reasons of space I have not been able to go into depth concerning trademark and brand naming, many more pertinent examples exist. Also, as new products are continually being developed (as of 1981 there were 1 million trade-

marks registered), to avoid duplication in naming, computers are now being used in the selection process. However, the principles for appropriate naming have not changed. With this in mind, I will conclude by re-emphasizing 3 of the points developed in this paper.

1. Naming determines a product's identity ; in marketing it is one of the most important aspects. As naming alone may in fact determine the fate of a product, management science research into this area is necessity.

2. Also, as injury to a product's image may be incurred through ignorance of linguistic connotations, research in this area must be undertaken.

3. When local sales restrictions or the administration of your targeting market allows, naming in Chinese characters and Arabic alphabets should be developed. However, as the overwhelming necessity for AGR naming and adaptability remains, more complete studies in this area would be welcome.

Notes

- (1) Kuwata, Saburo : 'Kokusai Shōhyōhō no Kenkyū', Chūo University Publishing department, Feb. 10, 1973.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Amano, Makoto : 'Shōhyōhō no Shomondai', Tokyo Nunoi Shuppan(pub.), Sept. 28, 1980.
- (4) Matsushima, Hiromi : 'Kokusai Naming', Nikkan Kōgyō Shimbun-sha, Feb. 28, 1976.
- (5) Mazze, E. M. : 'How to Push a Body Abroad without Making It a Corpse', "Business Abroad," Aug. 10, 1964.
- (6) Matsushima (see (4)).
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Tsunohata, Etsuko : 'Computer ni yoru Naming', "Kōkoku Geppan", Hakuhōdō (pub.)Feb. 1982.

〔付記〕

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