

THE EFFECT OF BRAND NAME SUGGESTIVENESS ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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Abstract: Branding has become in a few years the priority of any firm looking for success and sustainability. Brands have become very important for the company as well as the consumers, since they achieve several functions including, amongst other, the function of product identification through the Brand name. This paper tries to highlight the effect of brand name suggestiveness on how consumers can perceive and judge a Brand and the product behind it, and how do they consider purchasing options based merely on the Brand name. Results have shown a high level of interpretation and perception of brand name according to the meaningfulness of the chosen name.

Key-words: Brand; brand suggestiveness; brand name, perception, purchase intentions.

Résumé : La gestion de marque est devenue en quelques années la priorité de toute entreprise cherchant à se différencier et à assurer une pérennité à long terme. Les marques sont devenues incontournables aussi bien pour l'entreprise que pour le consommateur, car elles jouent, entre autres, un rôle prépondérant dans l'identification des biens et services à travers le nom de marque. Cette étude essaie de mettre en relief les effets du choix d'un nom de marque suggestif sur la perception et le jugement du produit par les consommateurs, ainsi que les intentions d'achat du produit basées uniquement sur le nom de marque. Les résultats ont montré des perceptions aussi bien positives que négatives du nom de marque, basée sur la compréhensibilité du nom donné à la marque.

Mots-clés : Marque, Nom de marque suggestif, perceptions, intentions d'achat.

Introduction

Today's marketplace consists of a myriad of products and services. Therefore, in a purchase situation, consumers are faced with an endless number of options. So, what can a company do to make customers buy their specific product/service, and what is it that makes a company successful? According to Charnatony & McDonald (1992), brands are one of the key determinants to success and this is because a powerful brand can work as a vehicle to get above the market noise. Actually, a brand is emotional, has a personality, and jails the minds and heart of its customers (Aaker, 1996). Great brands continue to exist from competitor's attacks and market trends because of the well-built relationships they create with their customers (Kotler, and Pfoertsch, 2006). Companies have

understood this equation very early; in Algeria there is more than 2000 brand registration every single year (INAPI, 2011), with 1.5% progress since the creation of Trade-mark registration system.

What are Brands? And what functions do they perform?

Branding is not something revolutionary as it has been around for centuries to distinguish products and services from one another manufacturer. Actually, the word brand originates from the Old Norse word *BRANDR*, which means, “to burn” as brands were and still are the means by which owners of livestock mark their animals to identify them (<http://www.etymonline.com/>). For some 4,000 years, branding irons have been used as means of identification and mark of ownership (Moore & Reid, 2008).

A modern understanding of brand provided by the American Marketing Association (AMA) broadens this definition to ‘a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify goods or services of one seller or group of sellers to differentiate them from those of competitors’ (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Brassington & Pettit (1997) state that branding is the creation of a three dimensional character for a product defined in terms of name, packaging, colors and symbols. Many definitions are given in order to provide the meaning of the Brand from different facets; for Czinkota and Ronkainen (2004) the term Brand refers to ‘a name, term, symbol, sign or design used by a firm, to differentiate its offerings from those of its competitors’. A brand is also defined as ‘the sum of its equity, identity, positioning, personality, essence, character, soul, culture, and finally its brand image’ (Upshaw, 1995). The definition of Brand has matured over years and new dimensions have been integrated such as brand personality; character; image and brand identity. Aaker (1996) takes into consideration the emotional and self-expressive benefits by introducing the brand-as-person, brand-as-organization, and brand-as-symbol perspectives.

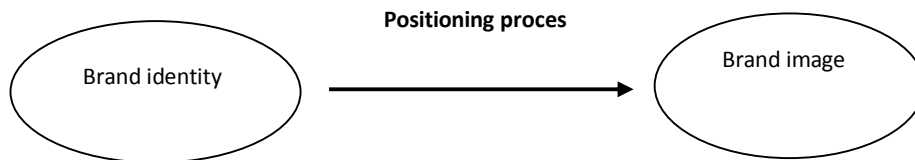
Each expert comes up with his or her own definition of brand or nuances of definition (Kapferer, 2004). However, all researchers and practitioners assume the brand to be a mental landmark for the consumers, it helps them create a knowledge about the product offered by a firm to make it easier for decision-making; thus in a purchase situation, and in front of a variety of products in shelves customers are less anxious and apprehensive about their choice (Lewi, 2006) brands, in fact, act as indicators of products/services quality and reliability; inherently they are risk reducers. Research in psychology has shown that recognition alone can result in more positive feelings toward brands (Aaker, 1996). If consumers recognize a brand and have some knowledge about it, then they do not have to engage in a lot of additional thought or processing of information to make a product decision (Keller, Apéria & Georgson, 2012). Brands deliver value for consumers by time-saving function as well (Chernatony & McDonald, 1992) they also play a significant role in signaling certain product characteristics to consumers, hence the use of suggestive brand names in some cases. The second dimension of brand functions is self-expression note Aaker and Biel (1992); consumers use them as personality statement and social badges; actually brands can serve as symbolic devices allowing consumers to project their self-image (Keller, Apéria, Georgson, 2012) consuming such a brand is a manner by which they communicate to others or even to themselves the type of person they are or they aspire to be. A brand is somehow a social marker of consumption. Many studies gave evidence that the identical product may be evaluated differently depending only on brand knowledge and brand perception. Aaker and Biel (1992) assert that the consumption of certain brand-product is just irrational and so the price the consumers are willing to pay to provide themselves with those brands, in this case the aspirational facet of the brand comes to justify this consumption.

How Brands are created?

To brand a product it is necessary to teach consumers ‘who’ the product is – by giving it a name and using other elements to help identify it (Keller, Apéria & Georgson, 2012). An obvious question is then asked: How are brands created? Brands help the product to be distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality (Hankinson, Cowking, 1993). Kotler and Keller (2006) define the positioning as the act of designing the company’s offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valuable place in the target customer’s mind; this definition involves that positioning is about to find a proper position for the brand-product in the mind of consumers compared to competitors products.

Positioning is about to create brand identity and then communicate it to the final target who receive it as brand image, Aaker (1996) defines identity as the brand image that brand strategists aspire to create or maintain in the consumers mind, as shown in figure 1 brand identity is what the company perceive while brand image is what the consumer target perceive. According to Aaker (1991) the consumer understanding of a brand’s image derives, at least initially, from the brand name and the brand associations it elicits.

Figure N°1: Brand image versus. Band identity.



Source : personal adaptation of the positioning process

As stated by Hankinson and Cowking (1993), brand personality consists of a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values. In fact brand personalities serve to represent and cue functional benefits and product attributes effectively, Aaker (1996). For example, we can use the case of the following products: Duracell (longer lasting batteries) ; Coca-Cola (oung, fun and sociable). Nowadays, building strong brands goes necessarily through brand personality creation, because it is very difficult to copy a personality. The first step in creating strong brands is to select a name for that brand, which can be a source of valuable differentiation amongst the product category by reinforcing brand personality statement. Not always an uncomplicated step, sometimes the choice turns out regrettable, instead of building a strong brand, the company finds itself with a product that has difficulties to be sold; as example the Ford Edsel, which is one of the more notorious failures in marketing history that has been largely attributed to its name (Hartley, 1992). An effective brand name can strengthen awareness and create a favorable brand image among consumers. As a matter of fact, brand names can enhance brand personality if the carried name conveys certain brand-product characteristics (Levy, 1978). In order to create the right positioning and a proper personality for the brand-product, brand name should be chosen carefully as it is considered as a shorthand communication of brand’s personality and positioning and, as such, is synonymous with the satisfaction the brand delivers (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993).

Consumers attitudes toward names were studied and evidence was found that attitude toward a brand name exists independently of attitudes toward a product or brand (Zinkhan & Martin 1987). Klink (2001) has studied whether meaningful new brand names improve product liking and positioning; results of the study have revealed that consumers prefer products with meaningful brand names than

products with less meaningful brand names. Moreover, products with brand name reflecting a relevant product benefit were positioned more strongly on that benefit.

Brand names at the heart of marketing research

More and more companies and other organizations have come to realize that one of their most valuable assets is the brand names associated with their products or services (Keller, Apéria, Georgson, 2012). As such, it may be possible for consumers to form complex attitudes toward the brand name in fact, evidence was found that attitude toward a brand name exists independently of attitudes toward a product or brand (Zinkhan, Martin, 1987); This is obviously the case for brand names which, from the start, are specifically chosen to convey certain objective or subjective characteristics of the brand (Kapferer, 2012). The brand name is thus one of the most powerful sources of identity (Management-hub). In fact Bricmont (1982) has found that brand name can influence consumer perception of the product quality, many research have corroborated the finding of Bricmont. Brands are a short and simple way of expressing or referring to something (offering). According to Brown (1992, quoted in De Chernatony and Riley, 1998) “a brand name is nothing more or less than sum of all the mental connections people have around it”. They provide memory shortcuts (Jacoby et al., 1977; Keller, 2003). Consumers under time constraint are more likely to buy brands with names they recognize (Chevan, 1992 quoted in De Chernatony and Riley, 1998). Since an individual has limited memory capability, to overcome this people pack small bits of information into large chunk in their memory and use brand as means to recall these information chunks (Miller, 1956). However, brands are more than mental association; strong brands also have intense emotional association (Kapferer, 2004). According to Blackett (1988) we can assign three roles for brand name. First, it identifies the particular product/service which then allows the consumer either to accept it or reject it. Secondly, it communicates messages to the consumers by suggesting some functional or symbolic attributes of the product. And finally, from the company side, the brand name functions as a piece of legal property allowing the company to protect it from competitor's attacks.

For Kapferer (2012) there is a variety of brand name strategies, actually the company can opt for one brand name that represents all its products (such as Samsung, Nokia or Ericsson). In some cases, the company assigns for each new product a different brand name (as with Henkel and Le Chat, Pril, Persil, Bref, Loctite, Schwarskof), we also call this naming strategy ‘Stand-alone names’ (Hankinson , Cowking, 1993). The names given to products come in many forms; there are brand names based on people (e.g. Estée Lauder, Mercedes, Lacoste); places (e.g. Amazon, Fuji) we also call them ‘Family names’; animals (e.g. Mustang cars, Dove soaps), objects or other things (e.g. Apple computers). Another categorization of brand name strategies does exist, Hankinson and Cowking (1993) talk about endorsed name which use the company name as support for the brand-product name, the advantage of this strategy is to allow better knowledge about the brand and enable it to benefit from the awareness, reliability and trust of the mother brand.

It is necessary to underline that research in the brand name area is divided into two parts; the first one concerns the setting of a certain number of guidelines to creating effective brand names. Practitioners for instance argue that a brand name should be short, potentially memorable, distinctive, easy to pronounce, extendable, meaningful, and should maximize product positioning (Robertson, 1989; Zinkhan and Martin, 1987). Most of the time, to follow these instructions, the chosen names are often suggestive (e.g. Wash & Go shampoo), nevertheless descriptive and suggestive brand names are less distinctive than others and they are unlikely to be legally protected. As a result; another kind of

concern emerged and research has been directed to investigate consumer's reaction to products-brand names (Peterson and Ross, 1972; Kenneth, 1982; Zinkhan and Martin, 1987).

A brand name is something more than a label; a brand name may be a major product attribute and a part of what the consumer buys (Kenneth, 1982 quoted in De Chernatony and Riley 1998), actually, Wänk, Herrmann and Schaffner (2007) evoked consumers' expectations regarding product attributes in relation with a specific brand name, their study had brought to light that consumers do not change their perception about what the brand name suggest to them, even if they are presented additional information about the brand/product characteristics and attributes. This attests of the strength of brand names. During the seventieth and eightieth, many researches had put the focus on brand name effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand or the product using word names, non-word names, typical and atypical brand names, semantics and sound symbolism (Klink 2000, 2001, 2003; Lowery, Shrum and Dubitsky, 2003; Sen, 1999; Dawar and Parker, 1994). For example; Peterson and Ross (1972, quoted in Robertson, 1989) argue that some randomly generated syllables are more "remindful" of a particular product class than are other randomly generated syllables. Klink (2000) has found that some vowels and consonants can communicate product-related attributes even when no other information is communicated to the consumers, additionally he demonstrated that some vowels and consonants communicate better on some functional product-benefits like size, performance, color, or smell than others. Following Zinkhan and Martin (1987), the exposure to new brand names leads automatically to the formation of a brand image, researchers call it Brand imagery. Consumers build inferential imagery based merely on the name cue; they seem to make inferences about brand characteristics even when no relevant information are communicated to them through promotional messages (Mitchel, Olson, 1981). Zinkhan and Martin's study has confirmed that consumers may form conclusions about a new brand when the only available cue in the environment is brand name itself; the study revealed that attitudes toward typical names benefit from a process of inferential belief formation, whereas atypical names do not (1987). In other words, names which call to mind imagery that reminds the consumer of the product category have more chance to benefit from positive attitudes than atypical names which are not congruent with the product category. An "atypical" name produces negative, or at best neutral, attitudes toward the new brand (Zinkhan and Martin, 1987)

Kohli, Harich and Leuthesser (2005) point out that evaluation of meaningful and non-meaningful brand names improves with repeated exposure to advertisement; however the rating of the attribute suggested by the brand name doesn't increase with exposure because it is already accessible by the brand name itself. The results of this study comes to confirm the prior research in the field; consumers liking for word name which are meaningful is confirmed several times; therefore it has been found that recognition of brand names is higher for non-word names than for word-names and for irrelevant word-names than for relevant word-names, though the opposite is corroborated for recall; in other words consumers have better recall for word-name than for non-word names and for relevant word-names than for irrelevant word-names (Lerman, Garbarino, 2002). According to these results Marketing managers are offered the choice between brand names that are more favorable for recall and brand names that encourages best the recognition process; the objectives of naming strategies differ from one firm to another, given that; marketing managers should take into consideration the memory process as part of the whole naming process.

However Keller, Heckler, and Houston (1998) offer that, in instances where future additional benefit claims will be made, use of "non-suggestive" brand names is advised, in fact, when the brand name is suggestive and conveys a particular product attribute, there is less flexibility with the product moving through different life cycle, and for brand image repositioning or evolution through time, as

well as for brand line extensions (Lerman, Garbarino, 2002). For example; with a brand name like “Wash & Go” there is little chance to make line extensions to other categories of products, or for repositioning strategy where the benefit attribute will be all purpose usage or all-in-one. Distinctiveness can be a key to success for a new brand name, indeed Warlop, Ralneswar and Van Ossler (2005) illustrated the relation between brand name distinctiveness and consumer judgment of that brand name, they showed increase in consumer judgment when the brand name is idiosyncratic.

Once consumer judgment is made, it is very difficult to change it ; Moreover investment in communication with the aim of changing the perceived image of a brand costs a fortune for the firm without ensuring the success of such operation, and very often to invest in a new brand turns out to be necessary to develop a new brand image, and this kind of action is much more expensive to the company than to capitalize on an already existing brand, not only overpriced but also a huge risk that it undertakes. The success of a brand name is synonymous with the good development of its brand equity over time.

THEORETICAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Brand names are vehicle of hundred of information, and thus, they reduce uncertainty related to the acquisition of a new product (Klink, 2001), especially with suggestive and/or descriptive names which convey product-related information for example. Force-Xpress for household cleaners, this brand name suggests two product’ attributes which are strength and rapidity, Consumer expectations are then fed by these information embodied by the name. the objective of this paper is to investigate the perceptions, associations and attitudes of consumers toward suggestive brand names. Thus, the current study tries to answer the following questions:

* Does a suggestive brand name impact on the level of perception of some functional and/or symbolic attributes of the product?

* How brand name suggestiveness could influence the consumers’ perceptions of a brand?

*To what extent the brand name can influence product overall evaluations (Brand judgment and willingness to buy)?

In order to answer the research questions, we opted for concrete case study of a brand name that has been introduced to the market with a huge Marketing plan, but contrary to the firm expectations the launch of this new brand was a total collapse, one of the assumptions of this failure was related to the choice of the brand name itself. In the light of the different researches conducted in this field, the following hypotheses can be entertained:

H1: Products with suggestive brand names, conveying a specific product-attribute are perceived as performing on that attribute.

H2: Suggestive brand names cueing specific product-related information, are more likely to enhance liking and preference of that product than general brand names do.

H3: Suggestive brand names have a positive effect on product's overall evaluations (consumer judgment and willingness to buy) compared to general brand names.

METHODOLOGY

Target participants: The target product-category in this study was laundry care products (detergents). Four groups of 8 housewives detergent-users were conducted in Algiers, aged between 25 and 55 years from mid-class. The sampling process was convenience-based, however all selected users share certain common characteristics like age, gender and income. For their participation, they received credit voucher worth about 500 dz.

Design: in order to answer the research questions and verify the stipulated hypotheses we have chosen an exploratory method, by using qualitative research which answer the How and Why of brand name perception and evaluation. Given the exploratory character of the study, we opted for group discussion (focus groups); it helps to catch the most realistic perceptions, ideas, associations made with a brand, as well as the interactions between the group members, another reason to choose group discussion is the fact that it allows opinions to bounce back and forth and be modified by the group (Frey and Fontana, 1991). According to Hankinson and Cowking (1993) the group discussion, as a dynamic process provides unconstrained insights into the ‘inner world’ of the brand.

Stimulus material: Printout of two concepts statements that focus on the positioning of the product in terms of functional as well as emotional benefits.

Experimental Procedure: participants were introduced to the group, under the leadership of female trained moderator who have explained the object of this gathering and set some rules in order to encourage respondents to involve in the discussion, participants were informed that it was just a simple discussion between them and the moderator, there was no right or wrong answers, and that only their opinions counted. The discussion started with a warm-up exchange, participants were invited to share their hobbies, free-time activities and how do they spend their day. This first section aimed to make them comfortable. The rest of the discussion was divided into two parts:

Part 1: Participants were invited to exchange their views, perceptions and experiences about a series of themes within the detergent category. As a first step, the moderator has collected feelings, perceptions, and associations made with the test brand name which is Xtra-blanc¹ as an answer to the question “*When I pronounce the name Xtra-blanc, what are all the images, feelings, thoughts that come to your mind?*” All the verbatim used by participants were also noted. Secondly, participants were questioned about the assumed functions of such a product “*In your opinion, what kind of laundry it might be used for?*” and about what makes them believe that. A concept statement resuming the brand-name, product attributes and functions, with the advertising claim was presented to the group; the moderator has gathered the new perceptions, feelings, and associations made with the brand name after reading the concept statement.

Part 2: the same procedure was followed but with a different brand name test “Xtra” which is more general. The concept statement contained exactly the same definition and features of the product than the first concept statement the only modification was in the brand name. The participants were invited to express their feelings, perceptions and associations formed when reading the second concept statement.

Data collection and analysis: The conversations were audio-taped and transcribed orthographically in the first instance, we proceeded then to a data examination through content and thematic analysis (Smith, 2007). The moderator was asked to counterbalance the effect of thought leaders in order to limit the censoring of some viewpoints held by less confident participants (Henderson, 1995). Data collection process respected four points (Sim, 1998):

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- Collecting data not only on what participants say but also on how they interact with each other;
- Quotations and verbatim were attributed individually to group members;
- Data collection task was separated from the coordination task;
- Support data-collection with tape-recording to facilitate further analysis.

After data-transcription, we determined a series of key themes that have been organized into four categories. The general themes of the discussion guideline served as the guiding spirit for the analysis; we considered three levels of units of analysis (Carey and Smith, 1994):

- Group level
- Individual level
- Contextualization level

A coding system was used to help creating an analysis grid. Quantitative content analysis was then applied, the strength of the coded categories was fixed upon the frequency by which they occurred in the group discussion, in other words, we determined the strength of a particular point of view through the number of individuals who expressed it, and/or the intensity (emphasis) by which it was expressed (Sim, 1998).

RESULTS

Based on the coding used, the following themes have emerged:

A- Inferential brand-name associations (for Xtra-blanc):

When asked “*what are all the images, feelings, thoughts that come to your mind, when you hear the word XTRA-BLANC?*” the participants gave the following answers:

Table 1: Quantification of inferential associations of Xtra-blanc

	G1 (n=8)	G2 (n=8)	G3 (n=8)	G4 (n=8)	TOTAL
=> Associations for Xtra-Blanc²					
*Very White	7	9	9	9	32%
*Strong	5	6	4	5	19%
*Sparkling	5	4	9	7	23%
*Perfect whiteness	8	6	7	7	26%
	25	25	29	28	107 (100%)
=> Associations for Xtra-white as a detergent					
a) Positive associations :	5	7	5	8	51%
*Exclusively for White laundry	6	5	7	6	49%
*Gives perfect whiteness	11	12	12	14	49 (100%)
b) Negative associations :	8	7	7	8	15%
*Never for colors	10	11	10	9	20%
*Might damage colors	6	5	5	6	11%

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*Bleaching	8	8	10	10	18%
*Might damage fabrics	9	6	4	5	12%
*Too strong	9	8	8	8	16%
*Not suitable for black colors	4	6	4	5	9%
*Must be expansive	54	51	48	51	204 (100%)
c) Willingness to buy	2	3	3	4	37%
* Yes	6	5	5	4	63%
* No	8	8	8	8	32 (100%)

The brand name Xtra-blanc had more positive associations in a general way, when the product category was not specified, however when product-category is mentioned, negative perceptions have occurred with 81% versus 19% for positive perceptions. “*It must have some particular substance to claim that whiteness!*” stated Naima. There was general agreement that Xtra-blanc might damage colors and fabrics, “*Such a product is for sure dangerous for fabrics*” pointed out Hanane. The product value was essentially determined by the functional attributes conveyed by the brand name. Participants have demonstrate a real interest for this kind of products but reluctances powered by the brand name “*Xtra-blanc, it must be amazing on white laundry*” said Fella, while Fatma has argued that such a product couldn’t be used for colors or black laundry which obliges her to buy different products for different types of laundry. When it comes to willingness to buy, the majority of the respondents were unlikely to acquire this kind of product (63% vs. 37%), they argued that the reasons behind their unwillingness are first, about the exclusivity of usage of that product; or because of the expected price; they also have cited other kind of reticence related to the strength of the product associated with the brand name, “*I think it is too strong on clothes whether they are white or colored*” stated Meriem. The word ‘white’ has been cited in 100% of cases; it connotes positive as well negative perceptions for the participants.

When participants were shown the concept statement of Xtra-blanc (Figure 2), they continued to believe in the associations evoked by the name, “If it is not exclusively for white laundry, why did they give it such a name” pointed out Saliha. The word ‘white’ was cited in 100% of cases, but this time the level of willingness to buy the product has increased slightly (43% after concept statement vs. 37% before concept statement). The new product as presented in the concept statement has showed a little rise in liking and preference, though; participant shared the same feelings, doubt and confusion prevailed about the relationship between the brand name and the product attributes and functions.

Figure N°2: Concept statement of Xtra-blanc.

Concept Statement Xtra-Blanc
Problem announcement: Getting the right cleanliness is a must for me and my family.
Consumer Insight: If my laundry is not sparkling and white, I will be ashamed in front of my family and entourage!
Solution: I had to check the washed clothes several times, BUT now, I feel so proud with my new brand Xtra-blanc...
Reason why: thanks to its high efficiency on white and even colored clothes, I get the best results from the first wash, no need for more checks.
Reason to believe: its formula has been developed by German experts using the latest technology in terms of whiteness and colors protection proving Extra results from the first wash.

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B- Inferential Brand-name associations (for Xtra):

The new brand name XTRA evoked very strong associations related mainly to the product-category attributes; positive associations were higher for 'Xtra' compared to xtra-blanc (70% positives associations versus. 30% negative associations). Xtra suggested a product with high level of efficiency and the possibility to use it for every kind of laundry (General usage). "It must be a multitask product, one for all" stated Hayet. Consensus was made that Xtra is general and so multitasking, the brand name procured good feelings for participants, and they looked relieved and less confused than for the first brand name. It even gave inferences on the scent it should have "I am sure the scent is as good as efficiency" proclaimed Fatiha, and the universality of the brand 'Foreign brand'. When it comes to the purchase intentions, participants were more likely to buy this product, disregarding the assumptions made about the price.

Table 2: Quantification of inferential associations of Xtra-blanc

	G1 (n=8)	G2 (n=8)	G3 (n=8)	G4 (n=8)	TOTAL
=> Associations for Xtra³					
*Efficient	10	9	12	10	43%
*Extra results	7	9	10	7	34%
*For everything	5	4	7	6	23%
	22	22	29	23	96(100%)
=> Associations for Xtra as a detergent					
a) Positive associations :					
*Multitask	11	10	12	10	27%
*Perfect results	12	10	7	9	24%
*Long lasting scent	6	6	5	4	13%
*Strong on stains & dirt	8	8	9	9	21%
*International brand	7	6	5	6	15%
	44	40	38	39	161 (100%)
b) Negative associations :					
*Might damage fabrics	7	6	8	8	
*Too strong	6	6	5	5	42%
*Must be expansive	8	5	1	5	31%
	21	17	14	18	27%
c) Willingness to buy					70 (100%)
* Yes	4	5	5	4	
* No	4	3	3	4	56%
	8	8	8	8	44%
					32 (100%)

When participants were shown Xtra concept statement, they found it relevant and interesting; at the same time they automatically compared it to the first concept statement which, for them, was irrelevant and confusing. The new Brand name and concept statement procured stronger purchase intentions. Nonetheless, participants still have some apprehension about the power of such a product; according to them it might damage fabrics.

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Figure 3: Concept statement of Xtra

Concept Statement Xtra
Problem announcement: Getting the right cleanliness is a must for me and my family.
Consumer Insight: If my laundry is not sparkling and white, I will be ashamed in front of my family and entourage!
Solution: I had to check the washed clothes several times, BUT now, I feel so proud with my new brand Xtra...
Reason why: thanks to its high efficiency on white and even colored clothes, I get the best results from the first wash, no need for more checks.
Reason to believe: its formula has been developed by German experts using the latest technology in terms of whiteness and colors protection proving Extra results from the first wash.
Brand Strapline : Xtra-blanc when your laundry becomes a source of pride everyday !

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The name of the product elicited quite pronounced expectations regarding product attributes, especially when the name is clear about the product-related information. The first hypothesis has been confirmed; results corroborated the accepted assumption that consumers use brand names as diagnostic and legitimate search attribute (Wänk, Hermann and Schaffner, 2007). Semantically meaningful brand names are relatively more communicative about product-related attribute than general senseless brand names. Given the absence of any other information in the environment, it is not surprising that consumers rely on whatever they can in order to infer product benefits (Klink, 2001; Wänk, Hermann and Schaffner, 2007). In light of factual information the name was supposed to play an inconsequential role in brand inference, however, the detergent brand name influenced what consumers expected in terms of product attributes, despite their additional knowledge about the brand features, participants nevertheless relied on the brand name in order to infer product attributes, this might be explained by the fact that semantically some brand names provide clear and unambiguous associations that activate strong user-imagery that can be whether extremely positive or extremely negative, these associations which are first impressions are difficult to erase. It is absolutely understandable that a restaurant named Bombay would serve Indian food, it would be impossible to associate it with Moroccan food; the same effect occurs with typical suggestive brand names.

We Hypothesized that suggestive brand-names are more likely to enhance liking and preference than general names do, this second hypothesis was rejected, Liking and preference were not significantly higher in case of specific brand name such as (Xtra-blanc), Dugree and Suart (1987) argue that brand-names serve to communicate the qualities that the product-category has to offer, this is indeed the case with the test brand-name, it communicated the product-category attributes that were not in line with the needs and requirements of the target (product for white laundry at that time was not the first need of the target-users), the level of involvement of the respondents might be the source of such results, in fact; participants showed a relief sensation that must come from the fact that multitasking product is the common product which represents the laundry category, as traditionally used.

The robustness of suggestive brand-names create strong expectations about the product qualities and attributes, and continue to affect the consumer's judgment and evaluations even when additional

information are available to counterbalance these expectations. The third research hypothesis was not supported; in fact we cannot reject the fact that specific meaningful brand names procure more positive evaluations than general names (Kohli, Harich, and Leuthesser, 2004), however we can explain these results by the involvement and previous experiences of the respondents which create a sort of barriers to specific products in the category of detergent where specific brand names such as Xtra-blanc are locked up. Traditionnally consumers are more likely to consider purchase of General-multitasking products than specific products. That explains why the specific brand-name did not benefit from likelihood and preference as expected.

In general, the findings suggest that suggestive brand-names are stronger than general brand-names, and the associations made with the first ones can be very robust and difficult to change even when additional information are available. However, we observed two dimensions which were not considered at first: involvement and past-experiences, these new dimensions should be weighed in future research simply because we recognize that it could have an effect on how consumers evaluate and judge a product using the only extrinsic cue which is the name.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Through our research we have seen that managers have an obvious preference for suggestive, descriptive and meaningful brand-names, using the brand-name as a cue for product attributes can reduce marketing budget (less campaigns to communicate products qualities and attributes), nonetheless they should consider the interpretation of such cues by the target consumers, and what are the associations consumers are likely to assign to the product brand-name. These associations have to be in line with the consumers' expectations. Managers should also consider other types of brand-name (non-meaningful; non-word...etc.) in their naming strategies, non-meaningful names for example offer on the one hand a large size of free associations, and on the other hand there is more flexibility with the product moving throughout life cycle and more opportunities for brand extensions in the future, enabling managers to build any desired brand-image. Moreover they are offered the possibility to change the brand-image over time.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the above mentioned implications, it should be pointed out that this research, like all researches, has limitations. First, we should mention the restrictions related to the nature of the study itself, qualitative research presents frequent issues:

- a) *Data collection*: two effects should be taken into account, the implication of the researcher (level of objectivity), and the dynamics of group which contribute to the emergence of thought-leaders, and censoring of dissenting viewpoints which lead to an erroneous general consensus and so conduct to irrelevant data.
- b) *Data interpretation and analysis*: the nature of data collected during focus groups is purely subjective "perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes" are not objective information, hence interpreting qualitative data is at some extent subjective.

In addition to limitations of the applied method, it should be highlighted that the absence of physical product may have led to stronger effects of brand name as opposed to what may be expected in real life. A third limitation was the brand names selected for the study, as these brands are not fictitious,

it is possible that respondents would have been confronted to them in real life, which are considered as a bias for the research findings. The generalizability of the findings may not be possible due merely to the research method “qualitative method”; further quantitative research would be of great value.

A comprehensive understanding of brand name effects, therefore, is contingent on much future research. In particular, this article focused on only one characteristic of the brand name: its semantic suggestiveness, however future research can be conducted in other area of brand name linguistics such as the effect of sound symbolism on brand name evaluation and willingness to buy, additionally future studies can enhance the understanding of the formation of attitudes toward brand names, as well as to attempt to quantify these attitudes in function of different facets of brand-name linguistics (word vs. non-word names; meaningful vs. meaningless names; typical vs. atypical names; the use of certain consonants and vowels; and the use of symbols in the name).

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2. ² The enumerated categories were mentioned at least one.
3. ³ The enumerated categories were mentioned at least once.
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