Branding – definition

**American Marketing Association:**

A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. 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.  

**Philip Kotler:**

“…-a seller’s promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services consistent to the buyers…” (2001:188).

“…has become so strong that hardly anything goes branded…” (2003:189).

Branding strategies

- **Individual names**, e.g. Bisquick, Gold Metal and Betty Crocker offered by General Mills. The failure of one product does not harm the company’s reputation;

- **Blanket family names**, e.g. Campbell’s, Heinz and General Electric. This limits the spending on advertising and name research and makes it possible to benefit from goods names of manufacturers;

- **Separate family names for all products**, e.g. Sears uses Kenmore brand for appliances and Craftsman for tools. This is appropriate when a firm offers a quite different products;

- **Company trade name with individual product names**, e.g. Kellog’s Rice Krispies, Kellog’s Raisin Bran. This makes it possible to use the company name is used to legitimise the names of products. Simultaneously products are individualised by their individual names (Kotler 2001:192).
Features of a good brand name

- suggest the products benefits and qualities, e.g. DieHard, Sunkis and Craftsman;
- be easy to pronounce, recognise and remember, e.g. short names like Tide, Aim or Puffs;
- be distinctive, e.g. Kodak, Exxon and Oracle;
- be extendable, e.g. Amazon.com expanded from a bookseller into other categories;
Branding - successes and failures:

- *FIAT Panda* (1980) – It was checked that the name was pronounced in a similar way in eight major languages of the world. (Metelski 1980).

- *Rolls Royce Silver Mist* – the name means “silver animal dropping” in German and it did not sell well in Germany (Haig 2006:181).

- *Chevy Nova* (i.e. Chevy cannot do it) not selling well in Latin America (Haig 2006:181).
Brand as a linguistic message

Disciplines involved in branding:

- etymology
- lexical statistics
- lexicology
- logic
- neology
- onomastics
- phonetics
- pragmatics
- psycholinguistics
- rhetoric
- semantics
- semiotics
- sociolinguistics
- word formation (Kall 2001:19)

Structural elements of a brand:

- **Brand contents**, i.e. the persuasive and promotional message that consists of an idea, a message and the contents the brand conveys.

- **Brand form**, i.e. a linguistic sign that functions on three levels:
  - Linguistic record – type, colour, size of letters, symbols, motifs and design;
  - Form of the linguistic sign – meaning, position in the name, repetitiveness, combination of letters, length of the name its internal, symmetry
  - Meaning of the linguistic sign – the lexical formula, stylistic and semantic values (Kall 2001:150)
Classification of brands

- **Transferred names** – existing lexemes, mainly common and proper nouns, adjectives and numerals are equipped with some new meaning related to the products they give name to, e.g. *Golf* is a transfer of a noun denoting a game onto a car model. One may say that the semantic field of the existing lexemes is enlarged by the organisation creating the brand.

- **Invented names** which include acronyms like *Microsoft*, abbreviations like *IBM*, words created by the removal of an affix or suffix, e.g. *fanta-stic* – *Fanta*. In fact they are “…semantically empty but phonotactically correct combinations of letters or whole words…” (Zboralski 2000: 139).

A more elaborate classification of brands is also given by the same author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand type</th>
<th>Brand character - method of transferring the message</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive (semantic)</td>
<td>Direct motivation through the meaning of words</td>
<td>Lux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestive (relative)</td>
<td>Allusion, connotation., suggestion</td>
<td><em>Dr Witt</em>, <em>Mustang</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic (emblematic)</td>
<td>Symbol contents</td>
<td><em>Gold</em>, <em>Ivory</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Arbitrary (speculative)</td>
<td>Motivation:</td>
<td><em>Hit</em>, <em>Renault</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• hidden from the receiver</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• free (accidental)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• image based</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Artificial (non-semantic)</td>
<td>No motivation</td>
<td><em>Adidas</em>, <em>Kodak</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(own study based on Zboralski 2000:80)

**Kosyl - chrematonimy**

- proper names transferred form one class to another in the process of transonimisation, e.g. the name *Aramis* being originally a literary character and then a product name;

- common names transferred to the class of proper names, eg. *golf* → *Golf*;

- word formation, often bearing the connotations of technical or scientific vocabulary, e.g. *Pianon* (*Kosyl 2001*:449-450)
Sound symbolism

“…individual sounds are thought to reflect, or symbolize the properties of the world and thus ‘to have meaning’…” (Crystal 2005:176).

Fernando Dogana:
- a, o, u express heaviness and slowness but also round shapes,
- i suggests dynamism and sharp shapes,
- e expresses dynamism and round shapes,
- sounds are more important that letters in the process of communicating of the brand. Thus, the name AKSE has the same number of sounds as the name RENAULT, which has more letters (after Kall 2001:151)

Stanford University research - Connotations of sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sound/ feature</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>g</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>l</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>v</th>
<th>z</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slowness</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>speed</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>large and luxurious</td>
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<tr>
<td>small and uncomfortable</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>pleasant feelings</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>unpleasant feelings</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Match the two words:

NALUMA & TAKETA

with the shapes below:
• Taketa – all consonants are obstruents. Obstruents are perceived as hard and sharp.
  Compare: Clorox – laundry product.

• Naluma – all consonants are sonorants. Sonorants are perceived as soft and smooth.
  Compare: Chanel perfume.

Phonotactics

- Jerzy Bralczyk,: a perfect name begins and ends with a vowel, e.g. *Alba* (2000:77).

- ZIMA of (Russian vodka sold in the western markets):
  - The name is short because it consists of two syllables and the syllables form the same set: consonant + vowel (C+V) creating the widely preferred pattern CVCV.
  - In addition to that the pattern:
    - accented syllable + unaccented syllable
    - is also used in English for creating nicknames which gives the name an individual character
OPEL cars

Letters as classification devices

- The names of vans end with the - o grapheme [Combo, Movano, Vivaro].
- The names of cars end with the - a grapheme [Corsa, Astra].

Sound symbolism

- Most of the names of OPEL models contain sounds suggesting dynamism and speed, e.g. [s] in Astra, Corsa, Signum, [v] in Vectra and Meriva or [z] in Zafira. These sounds are absent in Agila, which in turn contains [g] sound suggesting it is large and luxurious and [l] sound that has the connotations of pleasant feelings. Antara and GT seem to fail the test. Both of them contain the [l] sound suggesting: small, uncomfortable and unpleasant feelings. The [g] sound in GT suggests it is large and luxurious, which is not altogether true but, at least it compensates the negative connotations of the neighbouring [l] sound.
- Names like Agila, Meriva, Movano, Vivaro do not contain voiceless sounds at all. Generally speaking the names are dominated by vowels. Vowels are voiced, which seems makes the names distinctive and seems to give them with some power or, voice versa express the power of cars bearing the “voiced names”.
- The [r] sound is absent only in the names of four models. The sound is classified as an unpleasant one but to many people it may have the connotations of the engine noise and of such sports cars like Ferrari or Porsche. This may possibly explain why the [r] sound does not occur in the names of vans Combo, Movano, the name of a city car Agila and in the distinguished, elegant and quiet Signum.
- The [a] sound is present in the names of most of the models. Crystal Crystal (2005a) indicates that such an open vowel may indicate largeness as opposed to close vowels (2005a:177). One has to bear in mind that “…female names tend to end in a (spoken) vowel…” (Crystal 2005-b:1532). The [a] ending is definitely connected with female Christian names and this may be a major cultural issue for a car manufacturer operating across cultures. One should also remember the quoted above Dogana’s concept about [a]suggesting heaviness and slowness.
- The names of vans Combo, Movano do not contain “dynamic” sounds. This may create their image of “working horses”, also stressed by the occurrence of the [o]sound.
- Vivaro is offered in two versions - one of them is designed to carry cargo and the other is supposed to carry people and to possess the features of a “normal” car Therefore, its name contains “dynamic” [i]and [v] as well as the “heavy” [o].
Phonotactic features

- smaller models have names that consist of 5 graphemes and 5 sounds \([\text{Agila, Corsa, Astra}]\) while bigger cars have 6 graphemes and 6 sounds \([\text{Vectra, Signum, Meriva}]\). One may say that the number of sounds and graphemes is a way of categorizing the fleet of offered cars.

- It is also the number of the syllables that plays a similar sole. No single name is longer than 3 syllables following the concept of a short and easy to remember brand. The basic models have two-syllable names \([\text{Corsa, Astra, Vectra, and Signum}]\). Three syllables form a separate category of cars of \([\text{Agila, Meriva and Zafira}] + [\text{Movano, Vivaro}]\). The relationship of vowels to consonants (V:C) is well balanced.

- Only three names contain closed syllables, which may slow down their pronunciation and it is only \text{Signum} which is exceptional again and consists of closed vowels only.

- All the names used by OPEL avoid long clusters of consonants. \text{Astra, and Vectra} contain 3 consonant cluster while \text{Corsa, Tigra, Signum and Combo} contain 2 consonant clusters and \text{Agila, Vivaro} and \text{Movano} do not contain clusters of consonants at all. No cluster of consonants is placed at the beginning or end of the name thus making it aest to pronounce.

- \text{Agila, Astra} and \text{Antara} are perfect because they start and end with a vowel - Jerzy Bralczyk’s criteria (2000:77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V:C</th>
<th>Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>Agila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>Corsa, Astra, Tigra, Vectra, Signum, Combo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>Antara, Meriva, Movano, Vivaro, Zafira</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semantic features of the analysed names

- reference to an object outside the world of the motor industry: Agila, Astra, Combo, Corsa, Frontera and Signum. English origin [Combo], Latin origin [Astra and Signum] Spanish [origin] [Agila, Corsa and Frontera].

- the number of transferred names (6: Agila, Astra, Corsa, Signum, Tigra and Combo–) is well balanced with the invented ones (6: Antara, Meriva, Vectra, Zafira, Movano, Vivaro).

- Domains from transfer is made:
  - a total lack of geographical names, used by SEAT e.g. Cordoba, Ibiza or games / winds as used by Volkswagen e.g. Polo, Golf, Passat, Scirocco.
  - The sources: fauna (Agila, Tigra), astronomy (Astra) entertainment (Corsa) or music (Combo).
  - positive or at least neutral connotations – see the names used by some competitors, i.e. “biting and poisonous” names like Cobra or Scorpio or the Probe one which brings about both space exploration and medical test connotations.

OPEL vans – a summary of major linguistic features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COMBO</th>
<th>MOVANO</th>
<th>VIVARO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of graphemes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of sounds</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of vowels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V:C</td>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>3:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern of syllables</td>
<td>CVC+CV</td>
<td>CV+CV+CV</td>
<td>CV+CV+CV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>A group of musicians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotations</td>
<td>Music, fun</td>
<td>Move, moving in/out, moving on</td>
<td>Lively, exciting, attractive Viva Maria!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of name*/*</td>
<td>Suggestive</td>
<td>Artificial, suggestive</td>
<td>Artificial, suggestive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invented/ transferred (from) **/</td>
<td>Transferred (Music)</td>
<td>Invented</td>
<td>Invented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on Zboralski (2000:80)
** based on Kosyl (2001:249-250)
# OPEL car names – a summary of linguistic features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle type</th>
<th>AGILA</th>
<th>ANTARA</th>
<th>ASTRA</th>
<th>CORSA</th>
<th>MERIVA</th>
<th>SIGNUM</th>
<th>TIGRA</th>
<th>VECTRA</th>
<th>ZAFIRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>mini</td>
<td>SUV</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>SUV</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>sports</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>SUV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of graphemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No of sounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>No of syllables</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>V:C</td>
<td>3:2</td>
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<td>2:3</td>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>2:3</td>
<td>3:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern of syllables</td>
<td>V+CV+C V</td>
<td>Vc+CV+ CV</td>
<td>VC+CC V</td>
<td>CV+CV+ CV</td>
<td>CVC+C V</td>
<td>CV+CC V</td>
<td>CVC+C CV</td>
<td>CV+CV+ CV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>Stars</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>Tigress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotations</td>
<td>Agility (agile-)</td>
<td>Success and achievement <em>Per aspera ad astram</em></td>
<td>Symbolic / arbitrary</td>
<td>suggestiv e / arbitrary</td>
<td>suggestiv e / arbitrary</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of name*</td>
<td>Suggestiv e</td>
<td>artificial</td>
<td>Arbitrary</td>
<td>Suggestiv e / arbitrary</td>
<td>Symbolic / arbitrary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Transf. (Fauna)</td>
<td>Invented</td>
<td>Transf. (Astronomy)</td>
<td>Transf. (Sport / entertainment)</td>
<td>Invented/ Transf. (Semiotic s)</td>
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</table>

* based on Zboralski (2000:80)
** based on Kosyl

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