# Names in the Economy

# Names in the Economy: Cultural Prospects

Edited by

Paula Sjöblom, Terhi Ainiala and Ulla Hakala

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# PREFACE

Names are a pervasive part of human culture. We are continuously reminded of their existence by our surrounding environment. Names always come about and are used in interaction between people and in a language community. We give names to referents worth naming, that is, to objects that are meaningful or valuable to us. Moreover, organisations – companies in particular but also public organisations – are increasingly aware of the importance of naming; brands and their names are powerful tools in today's commercial environment.

The approval of names for common use requires a community with a fairly similar vision of the surrounding world, a shared culture. Cultures, in this context, can be conceived as the surrounding environments – international or national – where companies operate, or they can be seen as cultures of the organisations themselves. Culture produces names and names produce culture. Commercial names forge cultures, on the one hand, and changes in cultures may affect commercial names on the other. The world of economy and business has created its own culture, the perspectives of which must be taken into account when constructing commercial names.

The economy has a powerful role in the contemporary global world. Scholars of many fields have had to take this into consideration and search for new angles in scientific studies. There has also been a growing interest among onomasticians towards names that reflect the new commercial culture. Brand names, product names and company names play an important role in business and in the economy, but commercial culture also affects many other names, such as names of rock bands, names of race horses, and even traditional name types such as place and personal names.

The present volume, *Names in the Economy: Cultural Prospects*, contains articles that are based on contributions made to the fourth Names in the Economy symposium (NITE 4) that took place in Turku, Finland in June 2012. The financial support for this conference by the Foundation for Economic Education, the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies and the Turku University Foundation, indirectly promoted the publication of this book. The series of NITE symposia began in 2006 in Antwerp and continued a year later in Vienna. The third one was held in Amsterdam in

2009. All these symposia have led to publications (see Kremer and Ronneberger-Sibold 2007; Wochele, Kuhn and Stegu 2012; Boerrigter and Nijboer 2012). The goal of all four publications has been more or less multidisciplinary: they contemplate names that appear in the economic world, especially from the viewpoints of linguistics and onomastics as well as marketing and branding research.

The 20 articles in this volume have been developed from a collection of papers presented in NITE 4. They have been double-blind reviewed. The theoretical background of the articles is varied: there are traditional onomastic standpoints as well as newer linguistic theories, sociological and communicational views, multimodality theory, brand research etc. The range is also geographically vast: the authors come from ten different countries and from three continents.

All the articles more or less deal with names in the changing environment. The change has, in many cases, been utmost rapid, and the change is global; there is hardly any corner of the world that has not been reached by international culture. We have divided the book into four thematic sections: (1) global trends and the westernisation of names, (2) local separation and cultural identity, (3) names in the era of the Internet and (4) changing name use and naming processes in the changing world.

The first section casts a glance into the impact of globalism. As PAULA SJÖBLOM notes in her article, globalisation can be seen as a process of a world-wide cultural and economic homogenisation. As a counterpoint, the phenomenon may cause a rise of local culture and local identity. Sjöblom contemplates how both global and local goals may be taken into account in commercial naming. The theme continues with the article by KANAVILLIL RAJAGOPALAN who searches for answers to the question of how to make brand names appealing to world-wide and increasingly fragmented audiences whose tastes and trends are still culture-bound. These dilemmas are concretely approached in the article by NITHAT BOONPAISARNSATIT and JIRANTHARA SRIOUTAI. These researchers examine food brands exported from Thailand. They have noticed that many Thai exporters still export their products without brand names or under foreign-owned brands. The authors remark that a good brand name is essential in the introduction of a new product, and show properties of preferable brand names.

Global trends often refer to trends adopted from the Western world − in the economy, mainly from the English-speaking parts of the world. KYOKO TAKASHI WILKERSON and DOUGLAS WILKERSON provide us a view to names and prestige for physical spaces which can be bought: condominiums, assisted-living condominiums and burial sites in Japan. They demonstrate that the names of these commercial spaces employ non-

Japanese words, especially Western loanwords and pseudo-Western neologisms. However, westernisation concerns also commercial naming in Eastern Europe. The articles by ALINA BUGHEŞIU and ADRIANA STOICHIŢOIU ICHIM shed light on commercial naming in Romania from two different angles: Bugheşiu approaches brand names as cultural mediators both before and after the Revolution of 1989, and Stoichiţoiu Ichim analyses restaurant names of Bucharest in contemporary, post-communist society and shows both similarities and peculiarities in comparison to West European naming cultures.

The second section consists of articles that focus on commercial naming in local cultures. Names are important bearers of local identities and they consist of many features that evidently are targeted on local consumers. PAOLA COTTICELLI-KURRAS and ENZO CAFFARELLI describe company names in Italian advertising slogans and create an argument for a linguistic analysis of the names that most slogans are created for the local people. IRMA SORVALI takes a multimodal approach to Finnish bread packages and the bread names found on them. She also compares her data to smaller corpuses collected from Estonia, Sweden and Belgium. The relationship between a place and a brand, on the one hand, and between name and identity, on the other, is the theme of ULLA HAKALA and PAULA SJÖBLOM's article on place branding in municipality merging situations and of TERHI AINIALA's article about the commercial use of slang variants of the name *Helsinki*.

The third section applies to the question of the e-era. The Internet has probably been the most important instigator of the rapid change of cultures in the entire world. FABIAN FAHLBUSCH argues that the development of German company names towards simpler and shorter forms has especially been driven by their use on the Internet. Furthermore, social media has altered our habits: it has given new opportunities for ordinary people to take part in, not only in political issues but also in business. In his article, NICHOLAS IND discusses a new, consumer-oriented and participative approach to brand creation. Consumers and other stakeholders have, via social media, opportunities to influence brands through their active involvement. The Internet and social media have also created quite new types of names. New environments with a commercial aspect have emerged, as well. LASSE HÄMÄLÄINEN analyses user names found in one particular online gaming community. This study concerns one fairly new name type that has not extensively been studied before.

The last section focuses on articles that touch upon questions concerning the use of commercial names, the creation of names and naming processes in the changing world. The subject of the article by

ELKE RONNEBERGER-SIBOLD and SABINE WAHL concerns German brand names and their sound shapes. They compare new brand names with a large corpus of historical brand names and state that there are certain tendencies in the diachronic development of the names. The syntactic structure of commercial names is discussed in MARIA CHIARA JANNER's article. She presents a corpus-based morpho-syntactic analysis of commercial names in Italian and theoretically ponders whether the names are proper or common nouns. ANTJE ZILG approaches brand names from a communicative perspective. She argues that in the contemporary environment, one important function of a brand name is to generate a tie between the product and the consumer, and shows how this relationship is linguistically established.

SABINA BUCHNER describes in her article a special range of business, sugar beet harvesting technology, and searches for an answer to the question on how the names in this industry may reflect the culture of competition. Technology is, in a way, also the subject of MARCIENNE MARTIN, who ponders how the nicknames of two famous car brands have developed a legend. DINA HEEGEN presents in her article a typology of the structure of product names. She compares yoghurt names in German and Swedish markets, and finds naming tendencies motivated by e.g. the respective culture. Last but not least, ANGELIKA BERGIEN illuminates the concept of *paragon* which, in cognitive linguistics, refers to an individual member of a category representing an ideal or its opposite. She analyses two paragon names in business discourse: *Lady Gaga* and *Lehman*. Bergien shows that the paragon primarily indicates the writer's attitude towards the referent rather than helping the receiver to identify complex economic issues. A shared socio-cultural background is especially important in the comprehension of paragons.

The 20 articles in this volume represent the manifold world of names, cultures and economics. At best, they capture the spirit of commercial and other names at the beginning of the 21st century. The interdisciplinary perspectives comprising the theme of this book may lead us to new insights on names in the economy.

Finally, we would like to give acknowledgements to the persons and organisations that have made this book possible. First of all, we thank the authors of this collection and the anonymous reviewers for their prompt collaboration on this project. The Department of Marketing and International Business and the Department of Finnish and Finno-Ugric Languages at the University of Turku have supported our work in many ways. We are most grateful to MA Leonard Pearl, a translator and onomastician, for language consulting and for his many valuable

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Paula Sjöblom, Terhi Ainiala and Ulla Hakala

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# PART I:

# GLOBAL TRENDS AND THE WESTERNISATION OF NAMES

# *LUMIA* BY *NOKIA*, *IPHONE* BY *APPLE*: GLOBAL OR LOCAL FEATURES IN COMMERCIAL NAMES?

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## Abstract

Globalisation is often seen as a process of world-wide cultural and economic homogenisation, as well as a change from national identities to more diverse identities. Localism, on the other hand, emphasises local production and consumption, local culture and identity. However, local and global are not antipodes but rather different perspectives to interpret different socio-cultural phenomena. The term *glocal* describes the co-presence of both universalising and differentiating processes.

This paper will focus on global and local features of language in commercial names: what is it in language that particularly makes us consider a name global or local? Linguistically, global features are such structural and semantic features of language that promote and maintain the economic and cultural process of globalisation, whereas local features of language are perceived and interpreted only by a local language community and by a local culture.

The question will be approached with help of some examples. Finally, a proposal is made on how to combine local and global goals for commercial naming as well as two important functions of commercial names, i.e. bearing identity, on the one hand, and producing a good image, on the other.

## Introduction

When Nokia in October 2011 presented its new Windows phone models, Lumia 800 and Lumia 710, chief executive officer Stephen Elop stated: "Lumia is light; it is the new dawn for Nokia" (Reuters, 26 October 2011). While stressing the importance of the new model for Nokia, Elop,

in a way, interpreted the name of this product as well. *Lumia* is reminiscent of the Latin word *lumen* 'light' – and it probably is associated the same way all over the Western world, regardless of language.

Right after the phone was released, information about the "right" meaning of the name started to spread in social media. The tabloids in Finland screamed: "The new Nokia phone is actually a hooker!" (Mäkinen 2011, my translation). Someone had found that some online Spanish dictionaries had the word *lumia* as having the meaning 'prostitute'. Apparently, it is not a very familiar word, because none of the Spanish people interviewed by the newspaper knew it. Nevertheless, when they were told this meaning, they believed that they would not like to buy a phone with a name like this – and so said even the one who had said that the name reminds him of lightness. A negative association was easily attached to the name.

*Lumia* is a typical name in the contemporary global market: it is made of a quasi-word which is not meant to be any language. It is not informative – it does not describe the product – but the phonetic form has been carefully thought of by linguistic experts: the word form must not mean anything negative or cause pronunciation difficulties in any language, but instead awake similar kinds of images in the consumers' minds (Volpe 2011). These linguistic features make the name global, i.e. easy to use everywhere in the world.

However, at the same time, a global name like *Lumia* will be interpreted locally. Presumably, most Spanish-speaking people do not think about the uncommon Spanish word. Instead, Finnish consumers are likely to think of the Finnish word *lumi* 'snow' as well and its plural partitive form *lumia*. As for snow, it is reminiscent of purity, lightness and whiteness. And these images fit well into the more universal way of interpreting the name.

In this paper, I will discuss and clarify which linguistic features, if any, make us consider commercial names as global or local. The question is mainly theoretically approached, and illustrated with case examples. The purpose is to stimulate ideas and to provoke some interdisciplinary dialogue about the multifaceted phenomenon of globalism in commercial naming.

## Complex Concept of Globalisation

Global, globalism and globalisation can be understood in many ways (see a broader discussion in Garret 2010). The terms *globalism* and *globalisation* can be ideologically charged: they have the meaning of a

process of cultural and economic homogenisation, and *globalisation* is often combined with the "Americanisation" of consumption, mass media and culture. Sometimes *globalism* is a counterpoint to regionalism as well. (E.g. Söder 2010: iv.) Globalisation can also be seen as a historical economic change characterised by, for instance, increasing complexity of global supply chains and internationalisation of finance, and it can be seen as a change from national or social class identities to more diverse identities based on ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, hobbies or occupational interest (Hess 2009: 3–4). *Localism*, on the other hand, emphasises local production and consumption, local culture and identity. *Local* can be used as an equivalent for *domestic* or *national*, but also, on a smaller scale, it can be used to refer to a neighbourhood in a larger region (Hess 2009: 11). According to Robertson (1995: 31), local is a relative concept: a village community is local relative to region, as well as a society is local relative to a civilisational area.

Actually, local and global are not antipodes but rather different perspectives to interpret socio-cultural phenomena, two sides of the same coin. The term *glocal* in some way captures the complex local–global relationship (Hess 2009: 4). Global does not necessary mean only the homogenisation of cultures but also heterogenisation. *Glocalisation* means that global and local features reach their meaning and identity only in relation to each other. Local is not a counterpoint to the concept of global but rather an aspect of globalisation, and globalisation is a kind of hybridisation process. (Robertson 1995: 30, 40–41; see also Nederveen Pieterse 1995.)

There are three dimensions to globalisation: economic, political and cultural. They all have an influence on each other. Technological development, political and economic interdependence between different countries and interaction across large distances may give us the impression of living in a global village where our activity is first and foremost local. Global is not experienced uniformly, nor universally. It is a phenomenon of difference as well as uniformity emerging in relation to each other. (See Garret 2010: 448–449; Coupland 2010: 5.)

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2010: 81) argue that linguistic glocalisation has to be conversed in a framework that reckons with political and economic issues and the global and local power relations of languages. Without going any deeper into their arguments concerning language politics in general, I accept the wide contextual view as a starting point for the examination of linguistic features in the world of global economy. Many researchers see language as a resource and a commodity in the economy (see e.g. Heller 2010: 352), and taking advantage of this

economic value of language demands an understanding of the relations of languages in local and global contexts.

In this paper, I will focus on special features of language in commercial names: what is it in language that especially makes us consider a name global or local? Linguistically, I see global as such structural and semantic features of language that promote and maintain the economic and cultural process of globalisation, whereas local features of language are perceived and interpreted only by a local language community and by a local culture – the speakers of one dialect or a language. I will approach the question with help of some examples.

## Does Language Choice Make a Name Global or Local?

It is common knowledge that English has become the universal language of business. International trading is basically managed in English and companies recruit new staff members more and more with job advertisements written in English – even if the recruitment process focuses on a non-English-speaking country. Regardless of the local clientele, TV and press advertisements contain English. In many countries, English is quite commonly regarded as a universal language that everybody understands, although this insight in reality does not hold true (Gerritsen et al. 2000: 18). It has been argued that English is not a lingua franca in all contexts and for all users (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 2010: 81).

As David Crystal (2002: 70) puts it, "the world has never had so many people in it, globalization processes have never been so marked; communication and transport technologies have never been so omnipresent; there has never been so much language contact; and no language has ever exercised so much international influence as English." According to him, the position of English as the language of business has been confirmed not least by the dominance of the United States in the world of marketing and advertising (Crystal 1998: 53, 86).

Thus, it is reasonable to claim that English is a global language, and choosing it as the language of a commercial name is a statement for the international and multilingual use of the name. However, the question is not as simple as it may seem to be. English as the language of a name has different motives of choice and different interpretations depending on the surrounding culture and language situation. Similarly, it is oversimplified to claim that other languages would bring a local feature or an association of some special country to the name.

One should remember that English is also a local language to millions of people. A bus driver in Nottingham or an insurance agent in Canberra

hardly pays any attention to the language of the name *Apple* when tapping his iPhone. *Apple* is just the name of the company that produces, for example, mobile phones and it is associated to the familiar fruit that is also represented on the sign of the company. Whereas a Finnish phone owner pronounces the name /ɑplɛ/, which means nothing in his own language. He probably knows that it is English and that the company the name refers to is from the English-speaking United States. If he knows English, he understands the meaning of the word in the name, and if not, he anyhow associates the name with an apple because of the symbol connected to the name. *Apple* is a global name because the company acts globally, but the mere name form, the fact that the name is in English, is probably not as noticeable to English-speaking people as it is to other language speakers. In other words, English may be a sign of a global name just in those areas where English is not the dominant language.

The brand name *iPhone* provokes a bit more complicated associations even in English-speaking areas. *Phone* is understandable, it describes the product at least somehow (it is still a telephone as well), but there is no such appellative in English as *iphone*, which – in case there were – might not even be pronounced /aɪfon/ but perhaps in some other way such as /ˈɪfən/ or /ˈɪfəni/[1]. The speaker may think that perhaps the idea of *i* is to emphasise individuality – this is the phone that is like me. On the other hand, according to pronunciation, the name could be associated to 'eye'. Or maybe the *i* is an abbreviation of *intelligence*. All these kinds of different associations awakened by the name may be combined in the language speaker's mind. The name form is targeted more to global rather than local markets because of its obscurity: it will function similarly regardless of the language or country it is used in.

Let us take one more example of the complexity of language choice. For Finnish-speaking people the company name *Nokia* is a Finnish name. The name of the global telecommunications company is based on an old toponym: the first factory *Nokia Ab*, which at that time manufactured wood pulp, was incorporated in the 1860s on the bank of the *Nokianvirta* 'Nokia river' and on the grounds of the Nokia Manor. The name includes a relic of an ancient Finnish word that meant 'sable'. Even though Finns do not know the old word any more, their common cultural knowledge is to connect the name to the town of Nokia, an industrial town that has grown from the paper mill village, and therefore they regard the name as being Finnish. To other people in the world, however, *Nokia* is a name without any other meanings but those that are connected to the company.

[1] I am grateful to Leonard Pearl for this information (e-mail 12 February 2013).

The form of the name does not connect it to Finland – on the contrary, some people still think that it is Japanese. It is usually interpreted as a global name because of its global use.

As already described in the introduction, Nokia's phone model *Lumia* has a name that is framed for global use. It is not any language but it nevertheless arouses similar associations around the world. At the same time, the name form has local interpretations as well. Finnish speakers, who know the Finnish background of the named object, tend to also recognise the Finnish word for 'snow' in the name.

In a comprehensive study of Finnish company names (Sjöblom 2006), attention is also paid to the language of names. The names are analysed synchronically; in other words, the interest is not in the etymology and the original language of the words in the names. Instead, the question is discussed from a Finnish language speaker's view: how is the language to be interpreted by Finnish people? The study shows that Finnish company names include elements from several languages. The names are divided to three main groups: monolingual names, multilingual names and universal names. *Monolingual names* contain only one real language, mainly Finnish or English but also Latin or Swedish. *Multilingual names* consist of combination of elements of two or more languages. Again, the typical combination is Finnish and English, but many other languages, such as French, Italian, and Chinese can be combined – usually with Finnish or English. *Universal names* are divided to three subgroups: *international* names that contain only words that appear in several languages in nearly the same form and meaning (such as *pizza*, *kebab*, *café*, *supermarket*), names that contain words of no real language, i.e. *quasi-linguistic* names, and names that *consist only of a personal name* – in practice, the name of the owner or the founder of the company. (Sjöblom 2006: 303–304; Sjöblom 2009: 291–293.) The same results can probably be applied to product names as well.

Accordingly, from a local point of view, the language of commercial names can be categorised in the above-mentioned way. We can look the names through the eyes of one language community and analyse how the speakers of this language conceive the lingual origin of the names that they deal with. From this angle, local or global features in names can be rethought and pointed out. The context where the name is used is crucial. A Finnish element can be considered to be local, and an English element can be considered to be global in commercial names in the Finnish environment – in some other language community, the same features may be interpreted differently.

## Linguistic Features of Commercial Names

What are the local and global features that a commercial name can include? As stated earlier, local features are such linguistic features that can be understood and interpreted only by the local language community, such as people of a country or a village. Locality in a name first of all appears in elements that are dialectal, either words or morpho-phonological characteristics. For example, in Frisian areas in the Netherlands, it has been found that dialectal names have become more common as a response to globalisation (van Langevelde 1999: 58–59). On the other hand, Johnstone (2010: 387, 401) argues that it is oversimplified to claim that using regional dialects is a response to globalisation. Instead, she considers that dialect indexicality is a result of globalisation: local linguistic forms get new ideological values, they become the focus of differentiation and they are culturally noticed.

Naturally, the use of the main language(s) of the country or the region as well (such as Finnish and Swedish in Finland or French in the Walloon region of Belgium) can be seen as a local feature. Elements that include a local toponym or the name of a locally known person or just a local personal name are local features as well; for instance the use of *Hesa* or *Stadi* in company names in Helsinki (see Ainiala in this book), and the names of *Sandels* beer[2] or popular *Reino* slippers[3] in Finland. Locality can also be seen in elements that refer to local history or mythology, such as the names from the Finnish national epic Kalevala (e.g. *Kalevala Koru* 'Kalevala jewellery').

Global features in commercial names are linguistic elements that promote the process of globalisation in one way or another and, at the same time, are spread all over the globe with the help of the political, economic and cultural globalisation process. These elements can be interpreted all over the Western world in the same way. One of the features that can make a name global is the choice of language, which has already been discussed earlier. As previously mentioned, the meaning of language regarding the globality or locality of name depends on the context where the name is used. I will now continue with considering what kinds of language choices in general could make a commercial name globally functional.

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[2] According to the web pages of the manufacturer (Olvi), the name originates from the famous military hero, colonel Johan August Sandels, who led the Swedish troops into victory against the Russians in the Finnish War of 1808.

[3] *Reino* is the Fennicised form of the German male name *Reinhold* (Saarelma 2007: 65).

As previously mentioned, the most conventional way of integrating companies or products into the whole world is to use English parts in the names or make names that are completely English, but it is not the only way. The dead language Latin and ancient Greek are regarded as universal languages as well. They are languages that have given a great deal of vocabulary not only to Indo-European but to many non-Indo-European languages as well and therefore, are comprehensible to at least most of Western peoples. These languages can be considered to be politically neutral because they are not directly connected to any contemporary country. These are the reasons why Latin and ancient Greek without a doubt function globally in commercial naming. (Ainiala et al. 2012: 240.)

Names that consist of quasi-linguistic words which – on the other hand – often are made of parts of words from English, Latin or some other known languages are also globally functional. However, like the Finnish name *Nokia*, many names that seem to be quasi-linguistic are, in fact, words of some language. This may lead to awkward coincidences: a product name that was meant to be quasi-linguistic can mean something embarrassing in some language. For instance, a French company called *Laho Équipement* which sells technical equipment and materials for building trade has quite an inconvenient meaning in Finnish: as *laho* means 'rotten' in Finnish, it may be wise for the company not to expand its operation to Finland with that name.

Internationalisms, words that appear in many languages, are linguistic elements that make commercial names globally functional. Like quasi-words, these words can also be risky – *Volkswagen Polo* is 'poor Volkswagen' for Finns, for example. Most abbreviations as elements of names, e.g. *IBM*, *BMW*, *LG*, *MTV* and *HSBC,* which are amongst the world's most powerful brand names (Forbes.com), are equally globally vague. And, finally, any allusions to internationally known persons, places, history, and mythology can be seen as global features in commercial names – for instance *Nike* which includes the name of the Greek goddess of victory, Nike.

## Studying Glocal Names

In the world of globalisation, language communities overlap and locations, i.e. places, are inhabited by an increasingly multilingual population. It might be quite reasonable to ask, what is actually local, if the local community consists of long-time local inhabitants speaking one or perhaps several languages, and also having immigrants from all over the world.

There has been an increasing scholarly interest in linguistic landscapes (e.g. Shohamy and Groter 2009; Edelman 2010), and in these studies, proper names, especially commercial names, are also sometimes taken into consideration. Names of shops, brands and products are very common in the texts that show up in the linguistic landscape (Edelman 2010: 23). Eliezer Ben-Rafael (2009) has created a sociological framework for linguistic landscape research, and it may be applied to name research as well. According to him, there are four principles that guide the use of different languages in such situations: 1) presentation of self, 2) good reasons, 3) power relations, and 4) collective identity. *Presentation of self* relates to identity, and this principle aims at showing uniqueness and dissociation. *Good reasons* refer to the fact that the actors, in this case the name givers, adapt to the values of the audience and aim at solutions that generally are positively valued by the public. As a principle, *power relations* aim at imposing certain models by force of dominant position. And finally, there is *collective identity* which, as the first principle, relates to identity and aims at showing likeness, similarity to a certain part of the public.

I will make an effort in developing Ben-Rafael's framework to apply to commercial naming. The four-field table in table 1 is more or less a sketch of ideas and it has not been tested with actual company or brand names. Nevertheless, it is an attempt to combine local and global goals for naming in the economy and to combine two important functions of commercial names: bearing individual and social identity, on the one hand, and making a good image, on the other.

**Table 1. The four dimensions of commercial naming.**

| | **Identity** | **Image** |
|---|---|---|
| **For local people** | Collective identity | Good reasons |
| **For global markets** | Presentation of self | Power relations |

In regard to what has illuminated previously, the choice of a linguistic feature may have different status in different situations and to different audiences, i.e. to the four dimensions as described in table 1. This will be clarified through one name example. The Finnish engineering company called *Kone*, which is among the leading manufacturers of elevators and escalators worldwide, has a name consisting of the Finnish word *kone* 'machine'. The name dating back to 1910 probably was chosen for good reasons, in other words, for making a good image in the eyes of the

Finnish public: at that time, Finnish nationalism was gaining strength, but many companies in Finland had Swedish names and Finland was an autonomous part of Russia. Choosing a Finnish word for the company name was a comment on national values and appealed to the local people. In Finland nowadays, the Finnish word in the name *Kone* reflects a collective Finnish identity and Finnish people interpret the name first and foremost as local. At the same time, in the global markets, the name *Kone* presents uniqueness and dissociation and thus reflects the company's identity. Therefore, it represents presentation of self. The meaning of the word included is not internationally known. For global markets, *Kone* is a leading name that sounds quasi-linguistic and as such, is also a naming model for others. Therefore, it represents power in relation to competing companies.

A name can be glocal in many ways. This will be illustrated with a few more examples from the list of most valuable brands. They are names which are global not only because of the global use of them: *Pizza Hut*, *Kraft*, *Marimekko* and *Google*. *Pizza Hut* is an example of an English name which also includes an internationalism, i.e. the word *pizza*. For the local (American) people, the name probably carries a familiar image through the word *hut*. Instead, in non-English speaking countries around the world, the name may be connected to the similar kind of word *hat* because of the image reminiscent of a hat in the logotype. For global markets, the name is first and foremost a representation of the unique personality of the company. The German name *Kraft* and the Finnish name *Marimekko* function globally as names without any special meaning, as well as *Google* which can be considered to be a quasi-lingual name[4]. Globally, the associations connected to these names are based only on their phonetic form and the characteristics of the companies themselves. Locally, the name *Kraft* is associated to 'power', and the name *Marimekko* to 'Mari[5] dress'. The last example of a name that can be considered to be glocal is *Stadin Pizza ja Kebab*. It is a restaurant located in Helsinki, Finland. The name is very local because of the word *Stadin* which is the genitive form of a local slang name for *Helsinki*. At the same time, the name is quite international – *pizza* and *kebab* are international words and

[4] The story behind the name is somewhat more complex. The founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, wanted to find a name that was related to the indexing of an immense amount of data. They got the idea of the word *googol*, which refers to a specific large amount of numbers. Because of a spelling mistake, the name was registered as *Google*. (Koller 2004.)

[5] Finnish female name originating from *Maria*.

*Stadin* is understandable at least to Nordic people who have the word *stad* 'city' in their languages.

## Conclusion

We are indisputably living in a global world of business. Our economies and cultures encounter one another even within one country or one town, and even the smallest businesses in small villages can operate in the international markets and their potential clients may be found anywhere in the world. Inevitably, commercial nomenclature in particular has to respond to the challenges and change. Companies have to take local as well as international stakeholders and interest groups into account and design their naming policy bearing these both directions in mind. The names we started with – *Nokia*, *Apple*, *Lumia* and *iPhone* – are all appropriate globally, but they are global in a different way in relation to locality. The name and brand researchers have an interesting assignment to find out in what way commercial names are made glocal – as functional in the local as well as in the global markets.

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# CATERING TO TASTES BEYOND CULTURAL FRONTIERS: BRANDING AND THE SUPERVENING CHALLENGE OF GLOBALISATION

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## Abstract

There is a long tradition of regarding tastes and trends as essentially culture-bound. It is held that cultural differences determine our colour and taste preferences, dress codes, musicality and so forth. The dictum "De gustibus non est disputandum" is interpreted as implying that any cross-cultural evaluation of tastes is simply pointless and preposterous. Names, as onomasticians tell us, are likewise characteristically regarded as culturally sensitive. Indeed, marketing experts and advertisers have long known this for a fact. A product name that sounds enticing and appealing in one culture or one language, may sound like a profanity or at least invoke one in another culture, triggering an instinctive and totally unintended consumer repulsion. Here we come to the most challenging of all the many vexing questions in respect to naming brands in our globalised world: what factors must be taken into account while making our choices when it comes to naming brand new products for a worldwide market and/or renaming, or at least "rehashing", already existing brand names so that they are capable of being appealing to wider and more heterogeneous audiences, and apt to be marketed in new and completely alien settings? The answer is far from being either simple or straightforward.

## Introduction

The central argument of this paper is that, from a philosophical standpoint, branding is an activity that is riddled with all manner of tensions, many of them leading to gruelling tie-ups or even crippling

mental stalemates. Consider, for example, the commonplace remark that what makes a fresh brand name "click" in popular imagination, and thus guarantees its afterlife for years to come, is newness. People adore novelty and abhor what they perceive as passé. They prefer the out-of-the-ordinary and are enticed by what they see as nothing like what they are used to. Nevertheless, while novelty is indeed the soul of a successful brand name being introduced on the market for the first time and possibly the key to its ultimate success, it is equally true that in order for it to be easily memorable and readily recognisable (we are here referring to two important attributes that it can ill afford to dispense with, on pain of being consigned to the dustbin of oblivion), its novelty must not be allowed to go too far. Novelty not tempered with some amount of "familiarity" (sounds, permissible clusters of letters in a spelling system and so on) runs the risk of sliding into bizarreness, of smacking of something exaggeratedly weird or outlandish. The situation here is analogous to what the old adage says about liberty: namely, liberty not restrained by adequate means, can easily degenerate into licence.

In this paper, I intend to take a closer look at another looming paradox in the realm of branding and naming. Once again, it is all too often pointed out that names that stick in mind and are constantly spinning around in one's head long after being exposed to them for the first time, are precisely those that somehow appeal to one's aesthetic sensibilities. And it is further held that all too commonly one's aesthetic sensibilities are not the outcome of one's unique temperament or idiosyncratic developmental history or something like that. One may not even be consciously aware of them or be able to spell them out with any amount of clarity. Instead, one has the aesthetic sensibilities that one has because of the societal factors that play a decisive role in shaping one's tastes. Put simply: we are all inescapably products of the society in which we were raised, and society is the ultimate determinant of our likes and dislikes.

Such an attitude has encouraged many purveyors of the scene to conclude peremptorily that tastes and trends are basically or even definitively culturally driven. Such a conclusion has, in turn, sometimes been interpreted to mean that it is completely pointless to even try to sell one's brand name beyond one's cultural bounds. The fact that a given product name has been a roaring success in one society or setting does not in itself guarantee that it will do equally well in another. In fact, if it does succeed in another culture, that will be purely happenstance.

But then, we have every reason to wonder what happens in our age of globalisation, when products get passed around the globe. Can one at all market one's products under the same brand name in another cultural

environment or is one naturally obliged to market them under a new brand name under these conditions? That is to say, is it absolutely necessary to *adapt* already established brand names (or, maybe, replace them with more attractive ones) to better suit, say, the phonological structure of the host language? Researchers such as Klink (2000) and Bao et al. (2008) seem to be inclined to think so. Moreover, they invariably seek their inspiration from Edward Sapir's (1929) classic paper on phonetic symbolism. To be sure, there are a number of concrete cases that seem to recommend this strategy.

But what about truly global, highly successful brand names? Doesn't their very existence call the bluff of the time-old argument that there can be nothing transcultural about tastes? Besides, if the thesis of cultural insularity were an inviolable truth, all those internationally successful brand names, of which glaring examples are legion, would not be anything but glorious exceptions to the rule. And what can one conclude about a putative rule to which exceptions only keep proliferating as the world shrinks by the day, thanks to the relentless advance of globalisation?

In what follows, I intend to hone in on the crucial question of how brand names can cross cultural boundaries and aspire to a universal or at least transnational, transcultural status. I ask this question on the basis of the assumption that, with the process of globalisation implacably and, from the looks of it, irreversibly in progress today, experts in marketing must somehow find ways to break the gridlock of the alleged cultural confinement of tastes and trends.

## The Thesis of Cultural Specificity in Tastes

"De gustibus non est disputandum," says a celebrated Latin maxim, possibly of mediaeval origin. This maxim has been frequently invoked in order to discourage all attempts to compare tastes and trends across different cultures. For tastes, according to the maxim, are a law unto themselves; every society, every culture has its own unique tastes that cannot and should not be judged by using outside criteria (Bungarten 1999). A more recent amendment of the maxim that says "De gustibus et coloribus non est disputandum" adds one more ingredient to it. And, to be sure, colour preferences are notoriously known to be culture-specific.

Colour symbolism is one area that has been most looked at in this regard. Black, as it is well-known, is typically associated with political conservativism in Austria and Germany, but has patently unsavoury associations in, say, China and many other cultures. On the other hand, in India and China, white is associated with death and mourning in sharp

contrast with the West where it symbolises purity, among other things. We may go on adding to this list.

Names, as onomasticians tell us, are likewise characteristically regarded as culturally sensitive. An oft-cited example is that of the Sony Corporation, an internationally recognised Japanese manufacturer of electronic products. Founded in 1946 by Masaru Ibuka and Akio Morita under the name of *Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo K. K*., it did not take very long for the company to realise that it had better rename itself with a more attractive and easy-to-remember brand name or fizzle out from the world market. Indeed, marketing experts and advertisers have long known this for a fact. A product name that sounds enticing and appealing in one culture or one language may sound like an expletive, or at least invoke one, in another culture, triggering an instinctive and completely unintended consumer repulsion. Experts in phonotactics would argue that while the phonetic sequencing of syllables in brand names might make or mar the product, there are many other language-bound restrictions one is allowed to take liberties on in exercising creativity when it comes to naming. (Frisch et al. 2000; Bailey and Hahn 2001).

## Cultural Rootedness of Tastes and the Danger of Relativism

Taken to its logical extreme, however, the thesis of cultural specificity of tastes and values can lead to some veritable mind-bogglers. To begin with, it can help create the impression that, as sentient beings, we are all, as it were, lost on an island in the middle of the ocean, cut off and completely isolated from the rest of mankind. To make matters worse, there is no prospect whatsoever of making contact with the rest of the world. In other words, the island becomes a metaphor for a mental and cultural prison. However, Eriksen (1993) convincingly argues that the island metaphor is not only misleading but, in the final analysis, pernicious and leads to a complete mental paralysis. Here is what he has to say about the metaphor's tremendous appeal:

> […] an image of nearly totemic stature and significance in modern biogeography and evolutionary theory is that of a literal archipelago, namely the Galàpagos islands, which played a pivotal part in the development of Darwinism. In anthropology, too, island metaphors have had a strong attraction on the discipline's practitioners, and for similar reasons. Modern social anthropology was, as we are all aware, founded on an island, Kiriwina in the Trobriand archipelago, which is in many ways what the Galàpagos islands are biology. (Eriksen 1993: 133–134)