

# What's in a name?

**Jon Montgomery**, Hudson Group, and **Michael Lieberman**, Multivariate Solutions, highlight the importance of naming a brand

**I**T ALL STARTS WITH a name. Just as each of us has a name at the core of our individual sense of identity, so brands have names as the basis of their visual and verbal identities. Names project the personality of the brand; they inform the quality and integrity of what they represent. To be successful, they need to be relevant, pronounceable, memorable and free of negative connotations. (And as a legal requirement, a brand name must be unique.)

Beyond a single product or service, a name must also work within a company's brand architecture system. As part of its transition from hardware maker to integrated solutions provider, IBM had to streamline the number of brands used to identify thousands of products and services. Streamlining meant eliminating hundreds of unproductive or inappropriate names, and getting the entire organisation to adhere to new corporate guidelines that strictly enforce the corporate strategy – development in IBM's business units was guided by the revamped brand architecture.

With so much riding on a brand's success in the marketplace, naming is not a trivial matter. It is both art and science – using the power of words to give businesses and brands competitive advantage. In the branding profession there is a fundamental view that the equity in a brand name essentially consists of two elements:

1. the degree to which the target audience associates the brand with the strategic positioning objectives of the product
2. the extent to which that positioning lends the brand the desired amount of differentiation in its competitive space.

We believe this. We also believe name development is a creative process, but name evaluation is not; that we leave it to the intended audience, through quantitative preference testing. The users of a product or service are the most important judges of a name's efficacy. Our name evaluation tool, Brandcom™, was developed with this in mind. Others have also

developed quantitative methodologies for evaluating names.

Years ago, one of our clients, a branding consultancy that has become one of the world's largest, asked us for help. At the time, the firm was doing a thriving business in naming. But a recurring issue was that clients asked for some form of validation that the names it was recommending were acceptable in the real world. As a result, we developed Brandcom™, which the firm offered to many of its clients. We would work directly with the client, keeping at arm's length from the branding agency, making clients happier with the entire process.

Name evaluation and pack design evaluation we group together, because we use basically the same methodology in that the evaluation task is essentially alternative testing. The goal is to help the client choose the best name, with the least risk, from the list of final name candidates (or the best package design). Our methodology was designed specifically for the purpose of mapping the performance of a set of names (or pack designs) in relation to:

- ▶ each other
- ▶ established brands in the category (treated as control)
- ▶ a well-specified positioning strategy.

The test permits clients to evaluate test names relative to the intended positioning strategy, as well as in terms of aesthetic appeal. It can also be used – with slight modifications – to measure concept fit, if the name is attached to a new product. The inclusion of competitive brands is a major strength of Brandcom™. We believe that, for a new name to be successful, it must not only be 'on target' insofar as its own strategy is concerned, but also give the brand sufficient differentiation in the marketplace, and in the minds of consumers who are bombarded with advertising and other communications.

The test also includes a section on aesthetic appeal to determine the name liked most, and the images and associations

aroused by the best-liked name. This sequence of questions deepens management's understanding of a name's dynamics beyond the specified strategy dimensions.

## Case study

In this article we will examine a case study, where a client (company name and test names are disguised) sought to introduce a new line of soups to its existing portfolio. A number of names were developed by its branding agency, and all were submitted to legal clearance prior to testing.

The Stockpot Soup Company was exploring names for its new Flavour Enhancer line. The new name would ideally meet the following broad criteria:

- ▶ provide a clearly defined platform for communicating this new line of dry soups to consumers
- ▶ position the new line as being healthy (that is, consistent with healthy lifestyles).

Ideally the new name would be combined with the Stockpot label to benefit from its existing brand equity. The concept was given the internal label ALPHA.

Seven test names were developed through qualitative research and Stockpot input. In this phase of research, the names were submitted to a Brandcom™ analysis to provide management with a systematic evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses relative to the new concept. Specifically, the test provides:

- ▶ a picture (via a perceptual map) of how consumers structure the category, based on attribute ratings of established (control) brands
- ▶ a picture of how test names perform relative to established brands
- ▶ an overall measure of test names' appeal
- ▶ an overall measure of concept fit, that is how well test names are seen to match the ALPHA product description
- ▶ an overall measure of memorability, as captured by the percentage of respondents able to recall each name at the interview's conclusion.



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The study was conducted among 300 respondents recruited at central (shopping centre) locations in several major US cities. (Brandcom™ can also be used online or by telephone.) To qualify, respondents had to be females aged 18–69 who cook from scratch at home at least three times a week and who were positively predisposed to the Flavour Enhancer concept.

**Test names**

The names were designed to carry and reinforce the product concept.

- ▶ Stockpot Flavour Essence
- ▶ Stockpot Flavour Flair
- ▶ Stockpot Chef's Medley
- ▶ Stockpot Cook's Medley
- ▶ Stockpot Addables
- ▶ Stockpot Enticers
- ▶ Stockpot Flavoursome

To enhance understanding of individual test names' performance, eight established names in the seasoning, dry mix, soy sauce, bouillon and broth categories were included as controls.

- ▶ Stockpot Seasoning
- ▶ Mama's Chicken Broth
- ▶ Esther's Seasoning Salt
- ▶ Brand Empire Dry Seasoning Mixes
- ▶ Patton Soy Sauce

TABLE 1

**Top-box performance for the test names**

	Flavour Essence	Flavour Flair	Chef's Medley	Cook's Medley	Addables	Enticers	Flavour-some
Something I would use often	11	13	12	12	21	20	34
Product for someone like me	8	9	7	8	18	16	28
Gets my attention	10	14	12	12	21	17	36
Unique and exciting product	10	12	11	12	21	17	32
Something I would always keep on hand	10	11	8	8	19	16	32
Product for the way I cook	9	13	10	11	23	18	37
Adds flavour/pizzazz to food	8	11	7	6	21	16	32
Helps make food taste terrific	7	7	6	7	14	14	26
Has no artificial ingredients	12	12	10	10	20	18	27
Good for healthy lifestyles	7	8	5	5	14	14	23
Doesn't add fat or cholesterol	7	9	5	6	14	13	22
Good value for the money	5	7	6	6	10	9	22
Good for everyday use	13	14	11	9	18	13	31
Simplifies cooking	5	6	4	4	11	12	20
Easy to use	7	7	6	6	9	10	20

TABLE 2

**Top-box summary of competitive brand performance**

	Stockpot Seasoning	Mama's Chicken Broth	Esther's Seasoning Salt	Brand Empire Dry Seasoning Mixes	Patton Soy Sauce	Armstrong's Broth	Newman's Own Bouillon	Hornby's Secret
Something I would use often	25	36	13	14	18	16	25	27
Product for someone like me	22	34	11	8	13	12	20	21
Gets my attention	21	31	10	8	14	14	21	22
Unique and exciting product	20	37	14	11	17	16	24	24
Something I would always keep on hand	22	33	13	10	16	12	21	20
Product for the way I cook	20	32	12	10	14	16	19	18
Adds flavour/pizzazz to food	14	24	8	8	10	11	15	14
Helps make food taste terrific	15	22	7	6	10	11	16	17
Has no artificial ingredients	26	28	21	22	22	22	21	25
Good for healthy lifestyles	24	22	17	12	13	19	14	15
Doesn't add fat or cholesterol	11	25	8	9	8	10	18	14
Good value for the money	16	23	9	9	11	13	16	15
Good for everyday use	16	24	8	10	12	14	16	16
Simplifies cooking	9	16	2	4	6	7	11	8

TABLE 3

Test names' performance on all the Brandcom metrics

	Strategic fit	Name appeal (rank)	Concept fit (rank)	Memorability (rank)
Flavoursome	Strong	4	7	2
Addables	Moderate	7	5	6
Enticers	Moderate	5	4	7
Cook's Medley	Weak	6	6	3
Flavour Flair	Weak	3	3	4
Chef's Medley	Weak	2	2	1
Flavour Essence	Weak	1	1	5

- ▶ Armstrong's Broth
- ▶ Newman's Own Bouillon
- ▶ Hornby's Secret

Results

Table 1 summarises top-box performance for the test names. This provides a top-line glimpse of results and is the raw input that goes into the analysis.

Table 2 is the top-box summary of the competitive brand performance. This is the secondary input into the Brandcom™ equation. Again, it is worthwhile comparing these measures across the board.

Table 3 summarises the test names' performance on all the Brandcom™ metrics. Strategic Fit is the most important analytic measure in the methodology.

The principal output of the test is a series of perceptual maps – for the sample in total and for relevant sub-groups – providing direct, graphic representation of the performance of all the names on all the attributes simultaneously. The results of the other sections of the test – such as appeal, reasons for appeal and so on – are made available in tabular and in graphic form.

The map in Figure 1 shows that, with the exception of Mama's Chicken Broth, seven of the established brands do not present distinctive images, clustering in two general areas. Hornby's Secret, Armstrong's Broth, Lawry's Seasoned Salt, and Patton Soy Sauce cluster tightly.

Swanson's Broth, Wyler's Bouillon and, to a slightly lesser extent, Accent Seasoning, exhibit similar profiles. They are pulled away from that cluster by more positive attributes. Accent is drawn towards 'not artificial' and to a lesser extent 'good value' and 'healthy lifestyles'. Swanson's Broth and Wyler's Bouillon are pulled towards 'unique', 'something I would use often', 'something I would keep on hand', and

less directly, 'is for someone like me'.

College Inn Broth possesses the most distinctive and positive image of all eight control names. It is distinguished by its close proximity to 'something I would keep on hand', 'something I would use often', 'for someone like me' and secondarily to 'unique and exciting product' and 'makes food taste terrific'.

Once the perceptual structure of the category has been established, the performance of the test names is evaluated by overlaying them on the map (see Figure 2); note that each of the seven test names includes the family name Stockpot. One might expect this to pull the test names closer to each other than if they had been displayed independently of the parent identifier name. Indeed, a strong tendency to cluster is observed in the overlay.

Chef's Medley, Flavour Essence, Flavour Flair and Cook's Medley map closely around 'contains artificial ingredients' (just like a lot of other products) 'doesn't simplify cooking' and to a lesser extent, 'not for the way I cook', 'not for everyday use', 'doesn't get my attention', and 'not good for healthy lifestyles'.

Enticers and Addables are pulled away somewhat from the Stockpot cluster by 'for the way I cook', 'gets my attention', and 'is good for everyday use'.

Far and away the most differentiated test name is Flavoursome. It breaks away from the Stockpot cluster and is profiled by positive associations. More important, Flavoursome occupies a distinct location in consumers' perceptual space apart from all the established category brands. Flavoursome clusters tightly around 'adds flavour and pizzazz to food', 'is good for everyday use', 'simplifies cooking', 'gets my attention' and 'is for the way I cook'. The name comes closer to any other test or control name with respect to 'doesn't add fat or

cholesterol' (a component of the intended healthful strategic positioning) and 'is easy to use'. However, Flavoursome does not (nor does any other test name or control brand) come close to the other component of the healthful positioning: 'is good for healthy lifestyles'.

A review of the 'measure of strategic fit' is the most important analytic measure in the methodology. Looking at the map, one can easily see that a number of test names are only negatively associated with their defining attributes. For this reason alone, Chef's Medley, Flavour Essence, Flavour Flair, and Cook's Medley do not appear to be acceptable. Enticers and Addables are pulled away somewhat from the Stockpot cluster, but are essentially undifferentiated.

The measures of name appeal, concept fit (name appropriateness) and memorability confound somewhat the names' performance on the strategic fit measure. Flavour Essence, Chef's Medley, and Flavour Flair were felt by respondents to be the most appealing names and the most appropriate for the concept description read to them. Chef's Medley and Flavoursome were the most memorable.

In conclusion, Flavoursome performed extremely well on the measures of strategic fit and memorability, and less well on name appeal and concept fit. It was by far the best candidate for consideration.

With their somewhat undifferentiated image profile, Addables and Enticers performed only moderately well on strategic fit, and poorly on the other measures. Both were marginal name candidates.

Flavour Essence, Chef's Medley, Flavour Flair and Cook's Medley, due to their negative profiles on the strategic fit measure, were not acceptable.

Closing thoughts

Quantitative evaluation is an essential component of naming. Management can learn a great deal about how their target audiences may react to new names being considered. The evaluation process objectifies what too often is a gut-feeling call when companies develop new names and choose a name based on more subjective inputs. ■

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FIGURE 1

**Brandcom output perceptual map showing associations from brand to additive attributes**

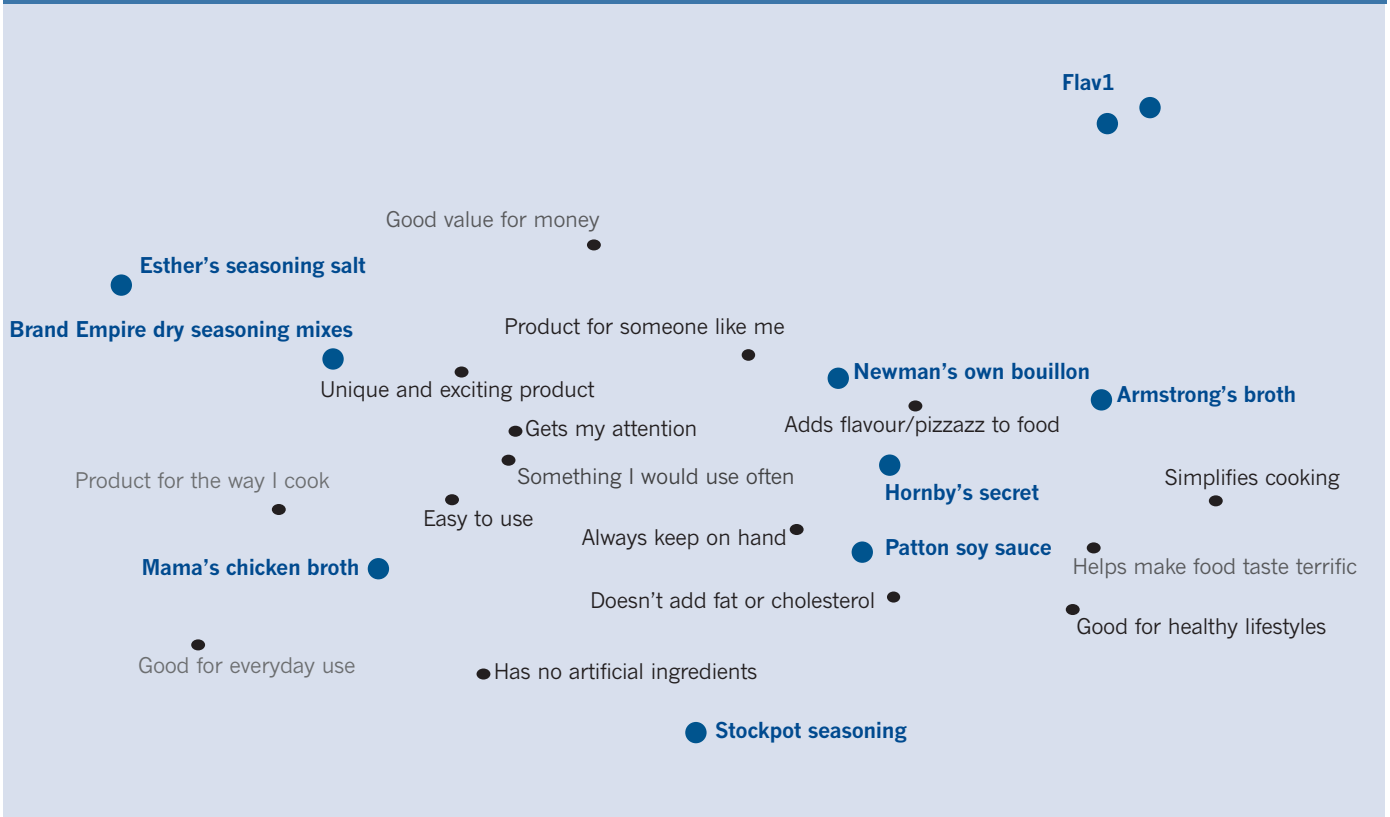


FIGURE 2

**Brandcom output perceptual map with overlay of test names showing associations from brand to additive attributes**

