



## Framing and naming: A process to define a novel food category



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### ABSTRACT

Product names can make or break a company. Likewise a poorly described category name may hurt an entire industry. In many cases names emerge from internal catch phrases or trade descriptions. When launching a novel category part of the role of the name is to frame the benefits provided by the innovative products, which constitute that category. Consumer packaged goods companies use a host of methods to select brand and product names, the fresh produce industry has been more lax in its role in category and product naming. The purpose of this research is to introduce a systematic process to frame and name a new value-added fresh food category. A generalized model is presented then a case study using this approach is provided. A fresh value-added mushroom category made up of a set of products is used to demonstrate the framing and naming technique. A combination of expert/industry and consumer insight is obtained through multiple rating systems. Qualitative and quantitative measurement processes are applied to build towards a final selection of the new category name. An approach to communicating the key product benefits (framing) including; Pseudo Delphi, focus groups, Thurstone Case V, online survey, and conjoint analysis. This new framing and naming process creates a word bank and then systematically eliminates under-performing names and frames until an optimal descriptor is selected. Additional applications are suggested.

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### Introduction

There are (at least) two elements to a product's identification for consumers; its frame of reference and its name. The name is usually associated with a specific company or product line – a brand. The frame is used to identify common category benefits. Frames are most useful at a category level and for novel products. For example, Campbell's Chunky soup is the name the frame is hearty soup. When launching a new product in a novel category Swifter, P&G had to consider both the name and the frame – wet floor cleaners. The new frame in this case had to distinguish the product from dry floor cleaners. Sometimes name and frame become identical. For example, Kleenex is a brand name and the frame is a paper facial tissue, which is also commonly also called Kleenex, as opposed to other personal hygiene paper products.

In the fresh produce industry names and frames are often indistinguishable or lack a unique identification. Very few fresh fruit

and vegetable items are branded to the same degree as consumer packaged goods. Notable exceptions, often varietals, include Fresh Express bagged salads, Chiquita bananas and Dole mushrooms. The distinction between brand/product names and frames are critical in other consumer packaged goods (CPG) areas. The majority of new food products develop names within an existing category frame as truly innovative category developments are rare. For example, both Hunts – Muir Glen and Cento make canned tomatoes but Muir Glen has framed their canned tomatoes as “organic.”

The objective of this research is to develop a model for the framing and naming of an innovative fresh produce category. Public health goals in developed nations call for increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Responding to this, industry is developing new products with value-added features such as location, production system or nutritional benefits to appeal to consumers. The model is based on research using a new mushroom category with elevated levels of vitamin D and related products within a broad fresh mushroom frame.

### Framing

A “frame” expresses the new category concept statement. The frame is intended to be useful for all consumers (current and

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potential), to help understand the novel contribution of the product. Individual frames are defined as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Framing is used to identify subtle but distinct differences between various concepts of cognitive categorization (Wicks, 1992). For example, in the wine regions of France, a Chardonnay is different from Bordeaux, but are both produced within France. However, Champagne is only Champagne if it comes from that French region. The correct frame is sparkling wine if not produced in the Champagne region. This distinction comes as a result of framing because although it is the same grape coming from France, individuals may conceptualize Champagne as higher quality, or a different set of products altogether. That is why there are many brands of French Champagne. The key is the frame and then the brand name. Another food example is kettle chips – a style of potato chips. Many brands make kettle chips, however the use of Kettle on the label frames the type of potato chip. Kettle potato chips are different from plain potato chips. They differ in a variety of ways but remain a (sub-) category of potato chips.

Though rare, there are cases of creating new frames in the fresh produce sector. For example, freestone peaches can be marketed by any company. Any company can also create a brand name for “freestone” peaches. The name of the category is well framed freestone or the flesh of the peach is free from stone. However, such frames rarely emerge from a systematic process. Indeed, there has not been a confirmed process to develop frames for products in the academic literature. Marketing managers go through *ad hoc* processes for framing and naming. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* (Flandez, 2009) provides three rules for creating a brand name;

- Take inspiration from everywhere.
- Make the brand name memorable.
- Make sure it matches your company’s mission.

but of course this does not provide guidance on how to accomplish this! Companies such as Lexicon market a creative “blackbox” naming process but this is not research based.

### Naming

Names, like food and shelter, are a virtual necessity. So it is understandable that when most marketers and executives find themselves in need of a product, brand or even category name they approach the task as if they were simply filling a void. But naming can be, and should be, much more. After all, how often is a new company, category or brand named or re-named? Names, unlike other elements of the marketing strategy, initiatives and even logos, have extremely long shelf lives. The really good ones never change (Osler, 2004). Product names are a powerful tool in marketing. Good names can help sell products. Well-known brand names are valued at billions of dollars – often more than the physical assets of the company. For example, Diamond Foods paid 6–8 times the market value for Kettle Foods suggesting the opportunity value of a future stream of income built around the brand name.<sup>1</sup> Products are not judged by just their rational and objective attributes, but also by emotional and subjective attachments. A name has the ability to develop emotional connections, both positive and negative, with customers. When designed well a name creates a substantial effect on the purchase decisions of consumers. A good name should be simple, memorable, easy to pronounce, and indicative of product benefits. This is particularly important for new products

(Brody & Lord, 2007, p. 543). There are also cases in which bad names destroy good products. The “pink slime” debacle that occurred in the spring of 2012 turned a million dollar industry bankrupt overnight when consumers became disgusted by the frame assigned to a set of products.

When a known brand extends into a product category that involves sophisticated and state-of-the-art technology, consumers face uncertainty and perceive a financial risk when considering the extension for purchase. For example, Goya moved from canned products targeted to Hispanics into frozen meals targeted to Anglos (Stanton, 2013). Alternatively, acceptance of the various brand traits (predictability, dependability, and trust) can affect the consideration decision suggesting particular extension naming strategies (new brand name versus brand or line extension). Results from a framing and brand (name) extension field study provide three insights. First, a consumer’s trust in a brand appears to improve the extension consideration independent of what naming strategy is adopted. Second, brands with good predictability seem to benefit only by using a direct (close to the base brand) naming strategy in the brand extension. Third, a perceived lack of expertise in the novel product appears to reduce the extension consideration even when a brand-bridging naming strategy is adopted (Vanhonacker, 2007).

It is clear that the frame and the name of products are important. Each name carries certain social, economic, and political opportunities and challenges with it. Naming is a mechanism to influence decisions, policies, and actions, which consequently shapes how citizens, governments, and other public entities interact (Sementelli & Herzog, 2000). However, the majority of the relevant marketing literature focuses on brand names. This is different from the framing and naming purpose addressed in this paper. That said, a review of this broader literature provides a starting point.

The topic of naming a category versus a specific and protected brand name is complicated, since most CPG companies when creating a new product want to protect the brand and not necessarily attribute the name of a new class of products. No clear research based method has been deemed the most effective course of creating a name for a category. Past methods entail *a priori* theory to develop names to test vowel pitches (Heath, Chatterjee, & Russo France, 1990) and general customer reactions. Other methods involved testing name pools (Lerman & Garbarino, 2002) words versus non-words (symbols), relevant words (i.e. related to a product attribute) versus irrelevant, and words which cue an advertised attribute versus those cuing an unadvertised attribute. What these studies concluded was recognition appears to be higher for non-word names than word names, for irrelevant words than for relevant words, and for names related to an advertised than unadvertised attribute.

One previous and popular methodology to develop names (Kohli & LaBahn, 1995) includes a five-step process. Step 1, set out clear objectives for the naming process. This can be drawn from the marketing strategy, especially the positioning statement for the product. Step 2, create a reasonably long list of candidate brand names. This will ensure a good pool of alternatives. Traditional methods of brainstorming and individual creative thinking are considered most useful. Step 3, conduct a thorough evaluation of the candidate names. It is important to consider each criteria deemed appropriate for the product being introduced. Managers should plan carefully to ensure a complete and objective evaluation of the names. Step 4, systematically apply the objectives and criteria specified in the earlier steps in choosing the final brand name. Step 5, choose four to five names for submission to the Patent and Trademark office for registration.

The critical piece missing from the above naming process is that it does not include quantitative analytic steps. For example, Step 3

<sup>1</sup> SAN FRANCISCO, February 25, 2010 (BUSINESS WIRE) – Diamond Foods, Inc. today announced it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Kettle Foods, makers of premium potato chips, from Lion Capital LLP for \$615 million in cash.

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