

# Phillips MediaSource WhitePaper

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## Naming: A High-Stakes Game

Think about the difference several well-chosen words can make in either bringing to life or breaking a compelling idea.

Compare BMW's tagline The Ultimate Driving Machine to Ford's Drive One. Just a few words can make all the difference in the world. BMW's tagline is a bang. Ford's is a whimper.

Would you rather have Wi-Fi in your car or a Bluetooth?

Now think about phone companies. Is TeleConnect a better name than Orange for a telecommunications service? Which company would be most innovative? Which would bring something new into your world? Which name stands a better chance of helping you to differentiate yourself in a crowded marketplace of ideas? To use the company's wonderful tagline, The future is Orange.

But conventional research often kills seemingly risky names like Orange, Bluetooth and Twitter—names which otherwise might outperform more suggestive, literal names like TeleConnect, Wi-Fi and QuickText.

Fact is, a brand name is the most powerful piece of messaging. It's also one of the most ubiquitous components of any branding program. No matter what, the name is always there—whether you see it in the small black and white print of a newspaper article, hear it on the radio or watch it brought to life on a television screen.

Pursuing a name is an involved process that can be time-consuming and expensive—involving trademark clearance, language and linguistic analysis, registration of domain names and corresponding activities, such as positioning and visual identity. And the marketplace is crowded, making it hard to find a name that is both unique and compelling. In Q1 of 2012, there were more than 1,752,424 active name registrations in the U.S. alone. Given these high stakes, organizations increasingly want more assurance that they've chosen the right name. So when selecting a name, it is important to use the right decision-making tools.

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The goal of name research is to determine whether a name accomplishes its purpose—is it distinct and does it prompt consideration? In addition, we wish to understand how a name affects perception—how does it contribute value to the brand, what is the brand personality that the name helps to create and is the name flexible (e.g., is there brand stretch)? If done well, name research can also reveal the interplay between words and other brand elements such as messaging and visual identity.

Name research also mitigates risk—what can be called the “disaster check.” This is especially critical when naming global products or multinationals, where a language gaffe can turn into a public relations nightmare. Just as important is what name research does behind the scenes—helping to inform the rationale for a name decision and overcome the biases, internal politics and idiosyncrasies that can sway client decision-making.

It’s extremely important to know the nuts and bolts of name research—what it can accomplish, how to prepare for research, the different research methodologies that can be used and the pitfalls to avoid when designing research and interpreting data.

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