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Master Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

Nail it!

The impact of creative product variant names on purchase intention for cosmetics

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Master Degree Project No. 2014:104
Graduate School

Nail it! - The Impact of Creative Product Variant Names on Purchase Intention for Cosmetics

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Acknowledgements

Five years of university studies have now reached its end and it is with great joy and pride that we are now typing in the very last words of our master thesis. The journey towards these final sentences has been characterized as much by hard and persistent work as by laughter. Therefore, the first persons we would like to thank for the emergence of this thesis are no others but ourselves - friendship and mutual respect goes a long way! Secondly, we would like to thank our supervisor Jonas Nilsson for his wise opinions during the process of our work, it has meant a lot for us. Last but not least, we have 697 respondents to thank, the first one being.... Just kidding. Thank you all, without you this thesis would not exist. Now, enjoy the reading!

ABSTRACT

In this study we examine if creative product names impact consumers' purchase intention for cosmetics. By combining previous literature about creativity, branding, self-congruity and hedonic consumption we hypothesised that hedonic products, exemplified by cosmetics, should benefit from creative names. An experiment including nearly 700 respondents tested creative product names within three selected categories against alpha-numeric names. The results of the experiment revealed that two out of three categories, Geography and Animals & Nature, increased purchase intention among consumers on a statistically significant level. For the third category, Sex & Romance, the results were not significant. Altogether, we conclude that creative product names, particularly those with strong symbolic meanings, positively affect purchase intention for cosmetics.

Keywords: *Creativity, Purchase Intention, Product Variant Names, Branding, Cosmetics, Symbolism*

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is one of our time's greatest buzzwords and has gone from being a concept previously mostly associated with artists to entering the parlour of the business world. Influential reports within the advertising industry have provided evidence that ads recognized for their high level of creativity are on average eleven times more efficient than less creative ads (Gunn et al., 2010). These findings underpin Ang and Low's (2000) statement that creativity is a necessity in order to break through today's media noise.

However, as the concept of creativity has been defined as something unique that breaks pre-set regulations and norms (Ang & Low, 2000), it is important to understand that this outside-the-box thinking requires a lot of attention and effort. Thus, since creativity does not come for free it is interesting to investigate whether it pays off to be creative or if a more conventional approach may be just as good.

The advertising business is one of the businesses mostly associated with creativity. This explains why so many scientific studies on creativity have been

conducted within the context of advertising (Ang & Low, 2000; Kover et al., 1995; Till & Baack, 2005; White & Smith, 2001). In studies of ads, creativity has recurrently proved to have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention (Ang & Low, 2000; Kover et al., 1995). Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that creativity could also have the same effect in other contexts. In our study, the area of interest is creativity and product variant names and their combined effect on purchase intention. A product variant is described as "a distinct unit within a brand or product line that is distinguishable by size, price or appearance" (Kotler 1997, p. 432). Despite their unarguable importance and their similarity to brand names, product variant names have not been as intensively studied as the latter (Govers & Schoorman, 2005). Thus, the contribution of our research is to start filling the theoretical gap in the research regarding creative product variant names' impact on purchase intention. In addition, we will test the effectiveness of three selected categories of creative product variant names; Animals & Nature, Sex & Romance, and Geography.

Today, product variants are often named either generically or with alpha-numeric designations. The former implies that the name given to the product is common and expected for the particular product category whereas the latter refers to a name consisting of a combination of letters and numbers. However, previous research suggests that these types of names are better suited for utilitarian rather than hedonic products (Pavia & Costa, 1993). By using the same logic, creative product variant names should be better suited for hedonic products. For this reason, we have chosen to investigate creativity's impact on purchase intention through names on hedonic products, and more specifically cosmetics. This leads us to the aim of our research, which is to find an answer to if creative names have greater impact on

purchase intention than alpha-numeric names. The purpose is to find out whether it pays off commercially to name a product variant in a creative way.

From this background, we set up the following research question:

Do creative product variant names increase consumers' purchase intention for cosmetics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity - Understanding the concept

The subjectivity surrounding the coveted concept of creativity is made evident by the large number of definitions that have been suggested by researchers throughout the years. Kneller (1965) defined creativity as something that is exploratory, innovative and adventurous whereas he claimed the opposite of creativity to be things that are done in a methodological, careful and conservative way. Creativity has also been described as a concept linked to an unexpected element – a surprise. In this suggestion, "surprise" has been compared to the ability of breaking pre-set regulations and, to put it simply, "walk the extra mile" for something (Peters, 1997). The mindset of breaking the rules and doing an extra effort is consistent with Ang and Low's (2000) definition of creativity as something that is unique and different from the existing norms. This definition is also the foundation for the same authors' suggestion that in order for an ad to be perceived as creative, it should consist of three dimensions: *novelty*, *emotional content* and *meaningfulness*. Novelty refers to the ad's unique and norm-breaking features, meaningfulness to the perceived relevance between the ad and the product and, finally, emotional content refers the feelings evoked by the ad (ibid). The latter has proved to be an important dimension

since consumers generally consider commercials that they experience an emotional connection with as more creative than other commercials (Kover et al., 1995). The elements of surprise (Ang and Low, 2000; Peters, 1997) and novelty (Ang & Low, 2000) in creativity are repeated by White and Smith (2001) in their claim that creativity is to be equated with the concept of originality. The authors state that creative products generally carry the same characteristics as the inherent meaning of originality - novelty, unusualness and unexpectedness (i.e., surprise).

In previous studies, creativity in ads has been positively correlated with increased purchase intention (Ang & Low, 2000; Kover et al., 1995). Humour, which could be considered a part of creativity due to its ability to create emotions (Guens & Pelsmacker, 1998), is also believed to have the ability to increase both positive feelings and purchase intention when used in advertising (Eisend, 2009; Strick et al., 2009). The same effects have been revealed for specific types of humour, such as wordplay and puns (McQuarrie & Mick, 1992). The positive impact of humour in advertising can be explained by the added value and meaning it gives to the consumers (who would otherwise not be interested in absorbing purely commercial messages) (West et al., 2008). However, the use of a humorous approach might not be suitable for less hedonic, serious product categories such as pharmaceuticals (Lowrey et al., 2003).

Product Variant Names and Brand Names - same, same but different

There is an extensive body of theory on the subject of brands (Aaker, 1991). Previous research has shown that branding can be used to change perceptions of quality and risk among consumers (Huang, et al., 2004; Dodds et al., 1991) and accordingly,

brand names have the power to influence consumers' purchase intentions (Grewal et al., 1998). This strong influential ability of brand names has made branding the most important extrinsic cue for marketers to work with, bypassing for example pricing (Dawar & Parker, 1994; Huang et al., 2004; Teas & Agarwal, 2000). For this reason, marketers are convinced that brands can have a significant impact on sales, independent of other marketing efforts (Kohli & LaBahn, 1995).

Brand names should be divided into different levels. A corporate brand is built up of values, history, capabilities and other associations closely tied to an organization (Aaker, 2004). It is a symbol that adds value beyond the tangible and functional (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995) and endorses the claimed benefits of a product (Aaker, 2004). The focus of this article, however, is branding at a product variant level. Since consumers are not only selecting from different brands, but also from different product variants, these need to be clearly distinguishable and have their own personalities separated from each other and from the product lines' brands (Govers and Schoorman, 2005). One example of how product variant names affect consumers is given in the article by Merskin (2007). In this article it is made evident that the names of the colours (i.e., product variant names) influence the consumer's choice when purchasing a lipstick.

Hedonic Consumption - shopping for fun

Consumption is often discussed in terms of hedonic or utilitarian consumption. The latter focuses primarily on the product's functional benefits (Spangenberg & Grohman, 2003) whereas the former addresses the aspects of consumers' behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive facets of the product experience (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In general, consumers evaluate

hedonic products on their ability to create arousal, evoke emotions through fantasies and the products' sensorial appeal (Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Babin et al., 1994; Kempf, 1999). In line with this, the hedonic shopper is guided by enjoyment, fun, self-expression and fantasy (Liao et al., 2009). This implies that creativity should be important when marketing such products. Furthermore, pleasure is central in hedonic consumption and a factor important for the purchase decision (Alba & Williams, 2013). The emotion-based relation to the product is also made evident in the way hedonic products are more often subject for spontaneous and instinctive purchase decisions. In comparison, the decision to buy utilitarian products is more often carefully considered and rational (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2002). Due to the characteristics of hedonic consumption, there is a need to put a great emphasis on the experiential benefits when hedonic products are marketed (Spangenberg & Grohman, 2003).

Self-Congruity - you are what you buy

Self-congruity is a concept that describes the consumer's perceived match between her self-concept and the product-user image. The self-concept is a four-dimensional notion depicting how the consumer perceives herself, or wishes to perceive herself, in private and social circumstances. Typically, the four dimensions making up the self-concept are referred to as actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image and ideal social self-image. The product-user image constitutes the consumer's stereotypic image of the type of consumers who regularly use a certain product (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

As stated within the theories about hedonic consumption, people do not only buy (or choose not to buy) products for their functional or physical attributes but also

for their symbolic meanings (Levy, 1959). The symbolism attached to products can be directed to the consumer's own self-image as well as the self-image the consumer wants to convey to others (Graeff, 1996; Levy, 1959). Research on self-congruity shows that consumers often use the purchase and consumption of products as a way of defining, maintaining and improving their self-images and personalities. Furthermore, the consumer's experienced connection between herself and the image of the brand is believed to have an impact on the same consumer's purchase behaviour and evaluations of the product (Graeff, 1996).

The process of creating a product-user image is called image strategy and aims at giving the product a value expressive appeal. Product user image and value expressive appeals are two notions that are used alternatively (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Consumers favour products that match their own personalities and by creating brand personalities at the product variant level, companies facilitate consumers' process of matching the right product to their personalities (Govers & Mugge, 2004).

Descriptive and Sensory Names – the effect of different types of names

Sensorial impressions and the way they affect consumers' evaluations of products is the core of a field within marketing called sensory marketing (Gustafsson et al., 2014). It has been shown that sensorial and descriptive associations in brand names improve consumers' feelings towards products and increases purchase intention (Mehrabian & Wetter, 1987; Swahn, 2011). This phenomenon is exemplified by two studies by Wansink et al. (2001; 2005) where descriptive names of dishes served in a school cafeteria enhanced the consumers' attitudes, preferences and purchase intention towards

the food. The types of descriptive names used were geographic names (a geographic description that fits with the product), affective names (related to feelings of nostalgia and memories), sensory names (vivid descriptions) and brand names (taking commercial advantage of positive preconceptions of a brand) (Wansink et al., 2001; 2005).

A study on how consumers perceive different types of names on colours showed that unexpected descriptive names, such as *Kermit Green*, were preferred to names that were common descriptive, such as *Grass Green*. The distinction between the two expressions is the unexpectedness of the name for the green colour. Comparing a green colour to that of grass will not surprise the consumer. (Miller & Kahn, 2005). Following White and Smith's (2001) discussion about creativity, the elements of unexpectedness and surprise in product names makes *Kermit Green* more creative than the name *Grass Green*.

An example of a product category famous for its use of creative and sensorial names is lipsticks. In a text analysis of more than 1700 lipstick names, Merskin (2007) was able to construct a list of the most common name categories. Among these names were names associated with sex and romance; animals and nature; and geography. Since lipsticks are found in the product category cosmetics, we assume that these types of names are applicable also for other types of cosmetics, such as nail polish. However, some of the name categories identified as common by Merskin were more specifically related to lipsticks than others. For example, lipstick names are often inspired by pleasurable food since the cosmetic as such is used on the mouth and lips. Thus, names such as "Raspberry Soufflé" and "Double Chocolate Truffle" do not have the same immediate connection to other types of cosmetics as it has to lipsticks (ibid). Therefore, we chose

to include the more generally applicable name categories in our study.

Geographic names

In marketing it is common to use the image of a country or a region to impact consumers' perceptions of a product (van Ittersum et al., 2003). This is called country of origin (COO) or region of origin (ROO) and can be used when naming new products (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Usually, COO and ROO imply that the product is made in, or at least somewhat connected to, the specific country or region that it is named after. However, geographic indicators can also be used in brand- and product variant names for products that are unrelated to the geographic area used in the brand name. By using a name from a distant location, an exotic image can be created. In the same way, marketers can create patriotic or familiar feelings towards a product by using a local name (Turley & Moore, 1995). According to Piron (2000), COO or ROO generally influence consumers in two different ways. The first is called a halo effect and means that the emotional values that a consumer associates to a country or region is transferred to the product carrying the name of the country or region. Secondly, consumers of a product add values of the product's COO or ROO to the creation of their own desired self-image. The way consumers identify themselves with the geographic names is an example of the previously mentioned concept of self-congruity.

Researchers agree that COO and ROO can affect consumers' purchase intention (Piron, 2000; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). However, the effect can be either positive or negative depending on the perceived match between the product and the COO or ROO (van Ittersum et al., 2003). As an example of this, consumers generally connect high quality cars with a British or German origin (Kotler, 2002). A practical

example of a company using geographical product variant names is the Swiss nail polish brand Mavala that relies heavily on geographic product names (Mavala, 2014).

Sex & Romance names

The use of women's sexuality to sell products has been a norm within marketing for many years (Merskin, 2007) and the process of naming products is no exception. In terms of defining "good" brand names, Robertson (1989) emphasizes the desirability of emotional product names that elicit positive mental images and cause pleasant associations among consumers. This could be exemplified by the assumed effect of the romantic name "Hopelessly in Love" or the implicitly sexual name "Shower Together". The importance of the product naming is also emphasized by Merskin (2007) who claims that since lipsticks (cosmetics) can only be evaluated by factors such as colour and texture, a name that stands out from the competition could be a deal-breaker for a potential purchase.

The commercial success of a sexually explicit and highly controversial advertising campaign for a British travel bureau, described by Pritchard and Morgan (1996), serves as an evidence of the old truth that sex sells. A similar conclusion was reached by Grazer and Keesling (2011) and Severn et al. (1990) as their research revealed that an appropriate amount of sexual content in advertising increased people's purchase intention. Another positive effect of ads containing sexual content is the proved increase of consumer interest compared to ads with a non-sexual content (Reichert, 1999; Severn et al., 1990). However, much research also points out the consequence of this sexual focus to be a decreased recall of the ad or the product's actual message (Reichert, 1999; Severn et al., 1990; Weller et al., 1979). Furthermore, it has been discussed whether there are differences in the

reception of sexual messages between age groups (Pritchard & Morgan, 1996; Weller et al., 1979). Pritchard and Morgan (1996) noted that while brochures with a sexually allusive copy and imageries promising a lustful vacation appealed Generation X members, older consumers stayed more reluctant to the same type of messages.

Animals & Nature names

Animals, minerals, flowers and other nature related names are commonly used for the naming of brands and products (Keller, 1998; Merskin, 2007). The benefit of using animals in marketing is that consumers often associate them with strong symbolic meanings that can be transferred to the product or brand (Philips, 1996). The meanings related to certain animals are often symbolically assigned (Spears et al., 1996) and could for example explain why cheetahs are more often depicted in circumstances where speed is emphasized whereas birds are often used when lightness and freedom should be communicated (Chan & Huang, 2001). The same logic is true for names related to nature. Freshness, harmony, imperfection and wilderness are examples of representations that nature has in many consumers' minds (Hansen, 2002). Because of the already existing symbolic meanings about nature and animals, consumers do not have to be educated about the message conveyed by the ad or the product name (Philips, 1996).

Humans and animals are often said to have a special bond and this bond is frequently used in advertising settings. It has been found that animals evoke positive feelings in most people, and therefore animals constitute an attractive stimulus that increases consumers' positive attitude towards a brand (Lancendorfer et al., 2008; Spears, 1996).

Alpha-numeric names

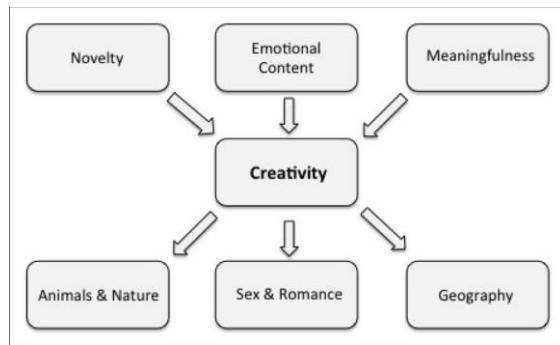
Alpha-numeric product variant names are combinations of letters and numbers that could refer to some aspect of the product, but they can also be nonsense names. Consumers are interpreting different numbers in different ways - odd numbers are for example seen as powerful while even numbers are perceived as feminine (Pavia and Costa, 1993). Whether a high or low number is preferred differs between product types. For cars, a higher number can indicate power whereas for make-up, a lower number can indicate uniqueness hence making it more desirable (Gunasti & Ross, 2010). However, alpha-numeric product variant names are often associated with science, technology and mathematics. For this reason, consumers generally perceive a good fit between alpha-numeric names and products that are considered as serious while hedonic products are perceived as less suited to carry these types of names. This means that alpha-numeric product variant names are appropriate for work clothes and sport clothes, but not for lingerie (Pavia & Costa, 1993). While other types of brand names might be very time consuming to identify and test, alpha-numeric product names is a fast and cheap alternative which is feasible in times when product life cycles are short (Boyd, 1985).

Conceptual model - linking the literature

Previous research has revealed that brand names and product variant names have the power to influence consumers' purchase intention (Govers & Schoorman, 2005; Grewal et al., 1998; Merskin, 2007). This article will consider creative product variant names and their impact on purchase intention on hedonic products, exemplified by nail polish (Gunasti & Ross, 2010). This specific product qualifies for the characteristics that consumers look for in hedonic products; enjoyment, fun, self-expression and fantasy (Liao et al., 2009).

Because of these characteristics, experiential and multisensory elements are considered as superior in the marketing of hedonic products (Spangenberg & Grohman, 2003). For this reason, we find it relevant to use research about descriptive names and sensory marketing when describing the impact of creative product variant names on purchase intention. Since consumers often buy hedonic products as a way of expressing and defining their self-images (Graeff, 1996), the product variant names become important. This is connected to the concept of self-congruity. As an example, the product variant name "My Address is Hollywood" is easier to use for self-expressive purposes than alpha-numeric names since its descriptive nature facilitates the creation of an appealing product-user image to a greater extent.

Previous research has shown that purchase intention is positively correlated with creativity (Ang & Low, 2000; Kover et al., 1995). As opposed to using the fast and inexpensive solution of alpha-numeric product names (Boyd, 1985), the decision to name a product creatively can be a way of creating names that stands out from the noise and creates consumer appeal (Ang & Low, 2000). Merskin (2007) identified that product variant names referring to sex and romance and animals and nature were among the most common ones for lipsticks. Through observations, we found that these names were also frequently given to nail polishes. Geographical names, including names on cities and other locations, also have a prominent role in how make-up and food are named (Merskin, 2007; Wansink et al., 2001) As a way of identifying factors that makes a name creative, we have used Ang and Low's (2000) three components of creativity: novelty, emotional content and meaningfulness. The conceptualization of our selection of creative names is shown in model 1 below.



Model 1: Selection of names

Common for all three categories is that they carry strong intrinsic meanings. The names from these categories arouse positive feelings among most consumers which in turn affect attitudes towards the product or the ad positively (Kotler & Gerner, 2002; Lancendorfer et al., 2008; Piron, 2000; Severn et al., 1990). Geographic names are popular because of their connection to the concept of self-congruity and self-image creation (Piron, 2000). Names alluding on sex and romance are proved to be intriguing for most people which is why they are commonly used in commercial settings (Reichert, 1990; Severn et al., 1990). Both name categories have been found to increase purchase intention (Grazer & Keesling, 2011; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Piron, 2000; Pritchard & Morgan, 1996; Severn et al., 1990). Names within the category of animals and nature create particularly positive associations due to the strong bond that often exists between humans and nature (Lancendorfer et al., 2008). Even though it is not explicitly stated that animal- and nature names increase purchase intention (Lancendorfer et al., 2008; Spears, 1996), one could assume that this effect is achieved by the positive attitudes they create.

Based on the research stating that the above categories of creative names increase purchase intention/causes positive attitudes, we have chosen to set up three hypotheses that underpin our research question:

H1: Creative product variant names including references to sex and romance will increase consumers' desire to purchase nail polish.

H2: Creative product variant names including references to animals & nature will increase consumers' desire to purchase nail polish.

H3: Creative product variant names including geographic references will increase consumers' desire to purchase nail polish.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

In order to find an answer to our research question we chose an experimental approach since experiments are known for being the most certain way of establishing causal relationships. An experiment is a procedure where independent variables are manipulated or controlled by the researcher in order to measure the effects on a dependent variable (Feinberg, 2013). In our case, the dependent variable was purchase intention. Furthermore, experiments are beneficial in the sense that they offer the researchers the opportunity to eliminate the impact of other possible explanatory factors (Esaiaasson et al., 2012).

Selection of names and manipulation check

The names tested in the experiment were all existing nail polish names. The use of existing stimuli is beneficial as it is easily accessible and realistic (Esaiaasson et al., 2012). To validate our selection of creative names we performed a manipulation check in order to make sure that the names were creative. The construction of the web-

based manipulation check was built around 11 questions asking the respondents which of the two names stated in each question that they found the most creative. Of the two names, different creative nail polish names were repeatedly compared with another option which was either an alpha-numeric name or a common descriptive (expected) name. The creative nail polish names were names that we found typical for each one of the chosen categories of our study (Geography, Sex & Romance and Animals & Nature). We chose to perform the manipulation check on second-year master students within the marketing programme. This sampling was based on previous studies' use of marketing students as expert judges of creativity in marketing (Kover et al., 1995; Stone et al., 2000). In accordance with the same studies, we chose to accept an answer as valid if at least 80% of the participating students appointed a name as the most creative one of the two (Stone et al., 2000). The result of the manipulation check proved that all creative nail polish names that were included in the study were considered as more creative than the alpha-numeric names and the common descriptive names. However, since we wanted to limit the study to three names per category, only the names that were perceived as the most creative ones by the participants in the manipulation-check qualified to the final experiment. In cases when there was no difference between the creativity-ratings, we made a random selection of which three names to be included in the study.

Pre-testing the experiment

To assess the functionality of a survey, pre-testing is usually done prior to the main data collection (Hunt et al., 1982) and as emphasized by Presser and Blair (1994), pre-testing of surveys is of high importance in order to get accurate results. In our pre-test, respondents were asked to fill out the survey while being observed by one of the researchers (Hunt et al., 1982).

If any of the respondents seemed hesitant to a question, the observer made a note and later reviewed the question in order to ensure that it was unambiguous and clear. When the survey was completed, the respondents were asked how they interpreted the different questions. This allowed us to recognize whether any of the questions had a risk of being misunderstood. The respondents were also asked questions about how they perceived the length and layout of the questionnaire.

The recommended number of respondents for pre-tests varies between 12 to 30 people. Yet, the size of the sample depends on the length and the complexity of the survey. Since our study mainly contains of one question repeated 22 times we felt contented with pre-testing the study on 10 respondents (Hunt et al., 2009).

Study Design

In order to test creative names' impact on purchase intention we designed an experiment where we were able to isolate product variant name as the explanatory factor. The experiment was conducted through a web survey which in total consisted of 24 mandatory questions, including two initial questions regarding gender and nail polish-use. The experiment began with an introductory text where participants were instructed about the procedure of the experiment. Following this introduction, the experiment started. Each page in the web survey visualized a picture of a bottle of nail polish, the name of the nail polish, a question regarding perceived purchase intention and a Likert scale according to which the participants were asked to rate their response. The names used in the experiment were alpha-numeric names, creative names and common descriptive names. The common descriptive names were included four times in the experiment with the purpose of making the difference between the alpha-numeric and the creative names less

obvious to the respondents. These names were however weeded out from the data set prior to the analysis of the results. In order to reveal how the names of the nail polishes affected the respondents, the same bottle and colour re-appeared two to three times in the experiment, although each time accompanied by a new type of name. An example of the setup of the experiment is illustrated in Figure 1-3 below. After the participant had filled in the scale, s/he moved on to the next page where the same procedure took place. This repetitive design of the survey questions improved the validity of the study since the respondents only needed to interpret and understand the question once. A lot of effort was also put into ensuring the quality of the question, for example by pre-testing the survey. Information about the purpose of the study and the re-appearance of similar colours was not revealed in the introductory text about the experiment. This non-transparency of the study conflicts against the ethical principle of informed consent. However, in order to achieve a non-biased result, the secrecy was a necessary evil of the experiment (Carson, 2001; Quinlan, 2011).

Web surveys are known for being an efficient and inexpensive way of gathering primary data (Zikmund, 2000). In addition, the computerized gathering and analysis of the data diminished the risk for misinterpretations and other issues typically related to qualitative studies. Hence, the reliability was improved (Esaiasson et al., 2012). However, a drawback of the format is that respondents are unable to ask questions to the researcher if there is any part of the survey that they do not understand (Zikmund, 2000). Another consequence of using web surveys is that they generally have rather low response rates. In addition to this, Galesic and Bosnjak (2009) found that the number of respondents participating in a web survey is negatively related to the reported time requirement for filling out

the survey. The same study showed that questions in the later part of the survey were answered faster and with shorter replies.



Figure 1: Web survey – creative name



Figure 2: Web survey – alpha-numeric name



Figure 3: Web survey – common descriptive name
Further on, Trost (2012) warns that attitudinal surveys, where the participant is

asked to consider a number of alternatives, can be repetitive and tiring for the participants. As a consequence, there is a risk that the participants will start responding in a randomized manner. In order to avoid these issues and increase reliability, we were careful to make the survey comprehensible and not overly time consuming (Zikmund, 2000). In order to increase potential participants' incitement to answer our survey, we gave everyone the opportunity to participate in the draw for a gift voucher for two luxurious breakfasts at a local café by stating their e-mail address in the end of the survey (Kalantar & Talley, 1999). Information about this opportunity was given already in the e-mail where the survey was attached. According to Oakshott (2006) a survey should have a maximum of 20 questions and start with some simple warm-up questions, for example questions about age or gender. In the remaining parts of the survey, the attitudinal questions asked were repetitive and consisted of fixed response alternatives. This was beneficial since we were able to avoid the problems connected to open-ended questions; opaqueness of responses and non-responded questions due to participant's uncertainty concerning how to write or what to write in response to the question (Trost, 2012).

For our experiment, we chose to use a 5-point Likert scale upon which the respondents were able to rate their perceived purchase intention. Dawes (2008) argues that a scale with fewer than five alternatives will decrease the reliability whereas Champney and Marshall (1939) point out that a scale with fewer than seven alternatives will increase the reliability. For trained raters however, a 9-point scale is perceived to increase the reliability. The participants in our study are university students and even though they occasionally answer different kinds of surveys, we do not anticipate them as trained raters. In addition, Symonds (1924)

concluded that any number of alternatives above seven would make the scale so finely tuned that the participants would not know the exact distinction between the alternatives. Thus a 5-point scale will improve the reliability of the survey.

The ambiance and the moods of the participants could have major impact on the responses of a survey and if the respondent is in a bad mood, responses regarding perceived purchase intention could be biased (Iarossi, 2006). This issue, which could also affect reliability, is hard to escape since the use of a web survey makes it impossible to control in which situation and environment the respondents answer the survey (Trost, 2012). We protected ourselves from this potential issue by drawing inspiration from the mood-setting way Till and Baack (2005, p.53) constructed one of their survey questions: *"If given the opportunity to purchase this brand, the likelihood of me doing so would be...."* (here, the respondent fills in a Likert scale). This way, the respondent had to imagine herself to be in a mood where she actually intended to purchase a nail polish.

Table 1: Visualization of the names in each category and their corresponding names (creative – alpha-numeric) that they share the same colour with:

Category	Creative Name	Alpha-Numeric Name	Colour
Animals & Nature	I Have a Herring Problem	B-12	Dove blue
Animals & Nature	My Chihuahua Bites!	K-98	Raspberry red
Animals & Nature	Koala Bear-y	567	Tulip pink
Geography	My Address is Hollywood	M33	Bubble gum pink
Geography	I Sao Paulo Over There	47	Taupe
Geography	Berlin There, Done That	A-300	Midnight blue
Sex & Romance	Hopelessly in Love	C5	Nude pink
Sex & Romance	Shower Together	5621	Marine blue
Sex & Romance	Between the Sheets	799	Rose red

Sampling

The participants of the experiment in our study are students from various institutions at the University of Gothenburg. Criticism against the use of student samples derives from studies showing differences in answers given by students and those given by the general population. Thus, student samples could constitute a risk of not reflecting a fair view of reality (Burnett & Dunne, 1986). However, since experiments (such as ours) often treat rather general questions and phenomena, the responses given by students should not be any different from those given by the rest of population (Esaiasson et al., 2012). There are also several studies indicating similar answers between students and a larger population hence supporting the use of student samples (Clevenger et al., 1964; Enis et al., 1972). A similar conclusion was also made by Shuptrine (1975) who supports the use of a student sample by claiming that in cases when students can be considered to share the same experience and knowledge as the population at large, they constitute a feasible sample. For nail polishes, we believe that this criterion is met since young women are the most frequent users of the product (Mintel, 2013). Thus, a sample of (young) female students would undeniably be knowledgeable and experienced. However, in order to avoid exclusion, we decided to address nail polish users of both genders when the survey was sent out.

Data Collection

The survey was sent out to 5198 students at various institutions (Law, Business Administration, Education, Economics, European Studies, Political Studies, and Food-, Nutrition- and Sport Science) at the University of Gothenburg. It was distributed by the university's e-mailing system, using an open link for 4775 of the students and a private link for 423 of the students. The reason for not using private links for all students was due to some institutions' preference to distribute the

survey themselves via their internal e-mail system. The benefit of using the private link, which required us to have access to the students' individual e-mail addresses, was that it allowed us to send out a reminder four days after the first mailing to those who had not yet responded. The reminder was sent out to 370 students and resulted in 14 new answers until the closing of the survey (53 responses from the private link before the reminder and 67 after). During the week that the survey was open for responses, 266 people accessed the survey without finishing it and were hence not included in the 697 responses that were gathered. The data collection was made during one week in the end of March 2014.

RESULTS

In total, the web survey resulted in 697 responses without any missing data. This meant that the accumulated response rate amounted to 13,4%. This is an adequate response rate according to Collis and Hussey (2009) and Krosnick (1999). After eliminating responses from non-users of nail polish, 646 responses remained, whereof 638 responses were given by female respondents and 8 by male respondents. Continuing with the data cleaning, the names referred to as "common descriptive" were cleared from the results. The two types of names left for further analysis in SPSS were then creative names and alpha-numeric names. Thereafter the mean values for the creative names were computed and compared with the mean values computed for the alpha-numeric names. Since all nail polish colours in the experiment were repeated twice under two different types of names - alpha-numeric and creative - the names corresponding to the same colour were compared with each other. This way, it could be investigated whether the participants rated the colours differently despite the fact that they were identical. As

displayed in table 2 below, the mean values of the purchase intention for nail polishes with creative names were higher than for the ones with alpha-numeric names in eight out of nine cases. In one case, there was no difference in the mean-value between the two corresponding names.

Next, a Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted in order to check if the variables were normally distributed. This test is suitable for sample sizes below $n = 2000$. The results from the test showed that none of the variables were normally distributed. As a consequence of this result, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used in order to test whether the differences in declared purchase intention between the names were significant. The Wilcoxon signed rank test is based on median values, however, in addition we will also present the mean values of the variables in the experiment. As we have a large sample in our experiment, we use the normal distributed z-value.

The dove blue coloured nail polish had a higher mean purchase intention when accompanied by the creative name "I have a Herring Problem" than when accompanied by the alpha-numerical name "B12". The Wilcoxon signed rank test then showed that the difference in declared purchase intention for "I Have a Herring Problem" and "B12" was significant ($z = -2.085$, $p = 0.037$). Similar results were found for the other two creative names in the Animals & Nature category when compared to the corresponding alpha-numerical names. A raspberry red shade tested with the names "My Chihuahua Bites!" and "K98" gave $z = -7.379$ and $p = 0.000$ in the Wilcoxon signed rank test while a tulip pink shade named "Koala Bear-y" and "567" gave $z = -4.074$ and $p = 0.000$. In table 2 we can also see that the mean values of purchase intention were higher for the two creative names compared to their alpha-numeric

equivalents. Furthermore, when testing the names in the Geography category we found that a bubble gum coloured nail polish got a higher result in terms of mean purchase intention when named "My Address is Hollywood" than when named "M33". Then, the Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that there was a significant difference in declared purchase intention ($z = -6.861$, $p = 0.000$). By using the Wilcoxon signed rank test, it was shown that the other two shades in the same category - one taupe-coloured and one midnight blue - were both rated significantly higher in terms of purchase intention when named creatively: "I Sao Paulo Over There" vs. "47" ($z = -6.200$, $p = 0.000$) and "Berlin There, Done That" vs. "A-300" ($z = -8.783$, $p = 0.000$). As displayed in table 2, the mean values for purchase intention are higher for the creative names. The last category of names, Sex & Romance, showed some different results than the two previous categories. A rose red shade got exactly the same mean value for purchase intention when accompanied with the creative name "Between the Sheets" and the alpha-numeric name "799". The Wilcoxon signed rank test was also unable to reveal any significant differences in purchase intention ($z = -0.177$, $p = 0.860$). For the two remaining name pairs in the Sex & Romance category, the mean purchase intention was higher for the creative names. However, when tested in the Wilcoxon signed rank test, no significant difference in purchase intention could be shown between "Shower Together" and "5621" ($z = -0.398$, $p = 0.690$). The same outcome (i.e., no significant difference) was obtained when testing the nude pink shade "Hopelessly in Love" with its equivalent, "C5" ($z = -1.791$, $p = 0.073$).

Table 2: Mean values for purchase intention per respective name:

Creative Name	Mean	Alpha-Numeric Name	Mean	Difference
I Have a Herring Problem	2.18	B-12	2.07	0.11
My Chihuahua Bites!	3.22	K-98	2.86	0.36
Koala Bear-y	3.31	567	3.13	0.18
My Address is Hollywood	2.90	M33	2.59	0.31
I Sao Paulo Over There	2.58	47	2.33	0.25
Berlin There, Done That	2.88	A-300	2.52	0.36
Between the Sheets	3.39	799	3.39	-
Shower Together	2.47	5621	2.46	0.01
Hopelessly in Love	3.43	C5	3.36	0.07

Table 3: Results from Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Non-parametric):

Creative Name	Alpha-Numeric Name	z-value	p-value
I Have a Herring Problem	B-12	2.085	0.037
My Chihuahua Bites!	K-98	-7.379	0.000
Koala Bear-y	567	-4.074	0.000
My Address is Hollywood	M33	-6.861	0.000
I Sao Paulo Over There	47	-6.200	0.000
Berlin There, Done That	A-300	-8.783	0.000
Between the Sheets	799	-0.177	0.860
Shower Together	5621	-0.398	0.690
Hopelessly in Love	C5	-1.791	0.073

Next, new variables were computed through gathering all variables belonging to the same name category (i.e., Geography, Sex & Romance and Animals & Nature). The alpha-numeric names corresponding to the creative names were gathered in a similar manner. Thereafter a Wilcoxon sign rank test was once again conducted for each name type. Here it was found that the level of declared purchase intention for the creative and alpha-numeric names were different at a 5 % significance level for two of the name categories - Animals & Nature ($z = -7.175$, $p = 0.000$) and Geography ($z = -10.870$, $p = 0.000$). As displayed in table 4, the mean values of declared purchase intention were higher for the creative names in each of the

three categories. Yet, for Sex & Romance, the difference in purchase intention was not significant according to the Wilcoxon signed rank test ($z = -0.278$, $p = 0.781$). The results for the Wilcoxon signed rank tests are displayed in table 5 below.

Altogether, the results from our experiment lead us to reject hypothesis 1 and confirm hypotheses 2 and 3.

Table 4: Mean values for purchase intention for name categories:

Creative Name	Mean	Alpha-Numeric Name	Mean	Difference
Animals & Nature	2.90	Animals&Nature_Alpha	2.67	0.23
Geography	2.79	Geography_Alpha	2.48	0.31
Sex & Romance	3.10	Sex&Romance_Alpha	3.07	0.03

Table 5: Results from Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for name categories:

Creative Name	Alpha-Numeric Name	z-value	p-value
Animals & Nature	Animals&Nature_Alpha	-7.175	0.000
Geography	Geography_Alpha	-10.870	0.000
Sex & Romance	Sex&Romance_Alpha	-0.278	0.781

DISCUSSION

Theoretical implications

The results from our experiment indicate that creative names increase consumers' purchase intention for cosmetics. When compared with alpha-numeric product variant names, two out of three categories, Geography and Animals & Nature, increased purchase intention on a statistically significant level. The strongest results were performed by geographic names. This means that we were able to confirm Hypothesis 2 and 3. The use of names within the third category, Sex & Romance, did not significantly increase purchase intention compared to alpha-

numeric names. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

In the literature review, it was concluded that the three categories of creative names, Geography, Animals & Nature and Sex & Romance, carried strong symbolic meanings. Symbolic meanings and associations affect purchase intention positively (Wansink et al., 2001) which means that contrary to the alpha-numeric product variant names, creative names can generally be assumed to provide consumers with a reference point that helps them to place the product into a meaningful context. Thus, creative names have the ability to evoke emotions and memories among consumers. This is an advantage that alpha-numeric names lack. In our opinion, this could be the main factor to why consumers in our experiment claimed to be more likely to purchase products with creative rather than alpha-numeric names.

Since the results for the three creative name categories in our experiment differed, we are inclined to believe that the symbolic meanings attached to Geography and Animals & Nature are perceived as stronger and clearer than the symbolic meanings attached to Sex & Romance. The meanings of the latter could be assumed to be more connected to personal experience and emotions as opposed to the meanings connected to animals and geographic locations, which are often broadly accepted and understood. The less distinct symbolic meanings attached to the Sex & Romance category makes it harder for consumers to apply the product and its name to a meaningful context and to their self-images. The role of self-congruity in the evaluation of products is particularly influential for hedonic products such as nail polish (Graeff, 1996; Liao et al., 2009; Spangenberg & Grohman, 2003). This is in line with Levy's (1959) famous statement that people do not only buy products for their functional benefits but also for their

inherent meanings. The less universally accepted meaning surrounding sex and romance might be a reason for the category's weak impact on purchase intention.

The manipulation check conducted before our main experiment confirmed the creative nature of all names included in the three categories of our study. This means that all names meet the requirements of the creativity criteria: novelty, meaningfulness and emotional content. The high creative level satisfies the hedonic shopper's search for fun, fantasy, self-expression and enjoyment. Despite the seemingly equal conditions for the different nail polish names to affect purchase intention, Sex & Romance performed significantly worse than the other two, Geography and Animals & Nature. This is an unexpected result since much research suggests that sex sells (Grazer & Keesling, 2011; Pritchard & Morgan, 1996; Severn et al., 1990). However, this research has not stood entirely uncontradicted as other researchers have pointed towards the negative effects of sexual content in advertising. Since consumers tend to focus their attention on the sexual content, there is a significant risk that brand recall and communication effectiveness decreases (Reichert, 1999; Severn et al., 1990; Weller et al., 1979). These factors could explain the poor results for the Sex & Romance category. Although being contradictory to the research saying that people focus a lot of attention on sexual content, a potential factor to the failure of the Sex & Romance category could be a general indifference towards sex as attention stimuli. The use of sexual messages in marketing has been the norm for many years (Merskin, 2007), however, the results from our experiment could be interpreted as if saturation has been reached where consumers have become immune towards these types of messages. Yet, an interesting point to be made in this context is the potential difference that

exists between visual and verbal messages. Since our study only included sexually allusive names, the respondents were not given any visual stimuli such as those in the study by Pritchard and Morgan (1996). The implication of this could be that sexual messages are heavily reliant upon vivid images in order to be successful.

Creativity is partly characterized by its elements of unexpectedness (Peters, 1997) and originality (White & Smith, 2001). How these elements are expressed varies, and in our study the factors making the creative names surprising and original differed between the name categories. Unlike the Geography- and Animals & Nature categories, the category Sex & Romance did not include any components of humour or puns. Instead, the “edge” of this category is its provocative nature. In our experiment, the names in the categories characterized by a humorous approach were more successful than the provocative names in the Sex & Romance category. By this finding, we recognize that creative names benefit from humour. We suspect that this finding might be particularly true for categories such as Animals & Nature and Geography which do not carry the same intrinsic edge as Sex & Romance.

Managerial implications

Our results suggest that in order to reach commercial success, companies should not rely on the cheap and convenient alternative of naming their cosmetic products into alpha-numeric names. By naming products creatively, companies are able to reach consumers at a deeper level which ultimately increases purchase intention. This connection between self-creation and product variant names is why companies should make an effort into understanding their potential customers and their existing and desired self-images.

Based on the three categories of creative names that were tested in our study, we

were able to show that names involving Animals & Nature and Geography are to be recommended whereas the effectiveness of names alluding on Sex & Romance should not be overestimated. The results of our experiment also indicate that humorous names are used with advantage.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Through an experiment, this study tested the impact of creative product variant names on purchase intention. The use of experiments is a widely applied but sometimes questioned method. The ones opposing towards experiments claim that the results are achieved from a too constructed situation, and that the results would be more spontaneous and thus different if they were gained from real-life (Esaïsson et al., 2012). Another limitation is that the nail polishes in our study are names of nail polishes available on the market. This means that there is an inevitable risk that some respondents might recognize the nail polish names and have a personal relationship to them. In this study, product variant names were isolated as the explanatory factor. Thus, other external factors such as brand names (and their attached values), price and quality were not considered in the current study. A suggestion for future studies would therefore be to repeat the experiment with one or several of the other factors added. Another subject for future research could be to test more hedonic product categories apart from cosmetics, or conduct the same experiment on utilitarian products. Finally, since this study was conducted with a quantitative approach, we strongly encourage future researchers to investigate the same subject through a qualitative approach. This way, the understanding of creative product variant names’ impact on purchase intention could be further deepened.

CONCLUSION

Our study investigates the unexplored area of how creative product variant names affect purchase intention. It combines two existing research areas: how creativity in ads increase purchase intention and how brand names and product variant names impact purchase intention.

The results of our study show that creative product variant names increase purchase intention among consumers of nail polish. It was found that product variant names related to Geography and Animals & Nature significantly increase purchase intention compared to alpha-numeric product variant names. Rather surprisingly, product variant names related to Sex & Romance did not give better results than alpha-numeric product variant names. We argue that this is due to the stronger and more well-established symbolic meanings related to Animals & Nature and Geography. The managerial implications of our study are that companies in the cosmetics industry do wise in giving their product variants a creative, imaginative name with strong symbolic values.

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