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The whole cast of characters: when naming strategies get personal

When it comes to naming strategies, we've seen it all: numerics, alphanumerics, Latin prefixes, Latin suffixes, city names, animal names, outer space names. We've seen these executed beautifully and fail tragically. What makes or breaks a naming strategy is how well the names come together to tell a compelling—and believable—story about your brand.

We've all lauded BMW for its alphanumeric naming. Apple's use of felines for its operating systems has been smooth (so far at least—once they get down to Jaguarundi, they might have to revisit). And Pepperidge Farms American Collection Cookies nailed the use of cities to create a cohesive collection. But all of these strategies have been done over and over, without a lot of differentiation to show for it.

But what about naming using, you know, names? This is an area, surprisingly, that hasn't been done to death.

| Then: | Then Again: | Now: |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| The Birkin Bag (Hermes) Named for the celebrity | Esprit d'Oscar (Oscar de la Renta) Named for the founder | Minnie pants (J. Crew) Named like a friend |

Kate Spade New York does it brilliantly. It's a colorful brand, and its naming strategy is made up of colorful people. Shoes, handbags, and clothing are all given unique women's names, which, collectively, make shopping the brand feel like mingling at a party. You aren't likely to find a lot of plain-Jane names here: Belina, Quinn, Lovella, and Stevie are the star guests at this celebration.

Warby Parker puts its own spin on personal names. In stark contrast to Ray-Ban's not-exactly-intuitive naming system (Remind me: what's the difference between the RB5243 and the RB5245?), Warby Parker rebels with a cast of highly distinct characters. Both the men's and women's collections feature a co-ed mix of personal names that reference folks that are a little rebellious themselves. There's the Monroe, the Huxley, the Finn, the Thatcher, the Beckett. They might not all have worn specs, but they all had undeniably strong points of view, which makes it a compelling approach for an eyewear brand.

So it's not just that they're using personal names; it's about creating the right roster for your brand. In the case of Kate Spade, it's all about creating the ultimate guest list. For Warby Parker, it means developing dossiers of figures with their own unique perspective.

So far, fashion and beauty have dominated the personal naming strategy, but we bet it won't be long before a savvy CPG brand finds a way to differentiate itself with this strategy. And we can't wait to meet it.

Caitlin

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Pronunciation:
/blú-skóp stíl/

Premium commodity. Premium perspective.

Origin: Interbrand

When it comes to storytelling for brands, it's what you leave out that counts. A focused, less-is-more approach gives your audience a little credit, and makes the most of limited attention spans.

