

etymology

Now that it has a name, what do we call it?

It's funny to hear this question at the end of a naming assignment, but it happens all the time. Now that it's got a super cool name, how do we want people to talk about it?

The right descriptor is a powerful tool. It can change behavior, reset perceptions, and create new categories.

It can even get a man to carry a purse. Pardon us, a "hold all." Fred Perry's men's shoulder bags avoid the horror of the "man purse" label by introducing a descriptor that's functional as can be: it promises to hold all your stuff. And with that, men are given permission to enjoy all the benefits of carrying their belongings in a convenient way, without all the baggage of a "purse."

There are times when the "what's it called?" question is baked into the name strategy itself. Dyson's AirBlade, for example, let us know that this was a different concept in hand drying, but they made what could have been the name for the category into the brand name, signaling a strong sense of ownership.

Axe, on the other hand, was more generous when it introduced the mass market to the idea of "body spray." To reach a younger, edgier audience, Axe knew that a cologne or aftershave wasn't going to ring true (and deodorant never really got anyone excited.) And it was a product they wanted people to use—every day, everywhere. The concept of body spray—a seemingly simple descriptor—caught the nose of a new generation, and a new *ahem* fragrant category was born.

Then:



Gym

Then Again:



Sports Center

Now:



Fitness Studio

The descriptor is a tool we see in every category, from beauty (Borghese Curafort isn't a moisturizer; it's a Moisture Intensifier) to coffee (Starbucks Via isn't instant coffee; it's a Ready Brew) to laundry (Tide didn't introduce single-use detergent packs; they introduced Pods) to retail (Apple doesn't hire retail associates; it hires Geniuses). While in most cases the use of the descriptor isn't trademarked, it can become, through repeated use, an important brand asset, and something that audiences attribute to ones who used it first.

What determines the success or failure of a new descriptor? Two things: it has to signal a break from category norms, and the experience has to live up to it. So now that you know what it's named, what are you going to call it?

Caitlin

This week's guest author, Caitlin Barrett, is Director of Verbal Identity for Interbrand and the creative lead for Naming.

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Constellium

Pronunciation:
/kan-stél-iəm/

A constellation of possibilities. The element of innovation.

Origin: Interbrand

In the unpredictable world of retail, agile brands thrive. Spotting emerging opportunities, delivering stellar customer experiences through the right channels, and knowing who the competition really is—these are just some of the traits we see in some of the top retail brands at the forefront of this fast-moving landscape. Read the full report: [Best Retail Brands 2012](#).

