

# “Unconventional Spelling Brand Names”



Weekly Learnings 41 / 2023

I recently read some new research on this topic and here are my learnings. The brand name pictures are attached below:

1. An unconventional spelling brand name is one where one alphabet or a few are deliberately misspelt. This trend was rampant amongst start-ups in 2021 and researchers studied this over the last 2 years. Indian examples are Wrogn, Arre, Tata Cliq, and Tata Neu.
2. The basic reason is that it's easier to do this in a digital world, with a license to do this. It would have been not easy to pull this off in a physical world.
3. The reason to do this is memorability, it's easy to trademark, the ability to get a domain site, to create distinctiveness and to build excitement.
4. What do the new research studies show? a. Consumers are less likely to engage with unfamiliar brand names and unconventionally spelt brand names. B. Why? Consumers believe that this is an overt persuasion tactic and hence feel the brand is trying to hustle and see the brands as less sincere. c. Consumers want to pay less for a misspelt brand name. d. One area where a misspelt brand name does better in studies is the 'experience' industry. This does not mean that there are no other successes, e.g., Lyft, and Tumblr are successes.
5. All brand name choices have short and long-term consequences. In categories with retail distribution, one has to think about what the 'cart call' will be.
6. Indian actors have always changed an alphabet or two based on numerology. Rithik Roshan added an H and changed it to Hrithik Roshan, Kareina Kapoor dropped the I and added an E, changing her name to Kareena Kapoor. The Indian actor alphabet change list is long - Suni(e)l Shetty, Vive(i)k Oberoi, Devgan to Devgn.
7. Some brands struggle from day one. 1. Le fancy, a soap that the Tamil Nadu consumers and trade found it difficult to even pronounce. They ended up calling it the mottai (egg) soap. 2. Variants that have multiple layers in the brand name are also a challenge, what

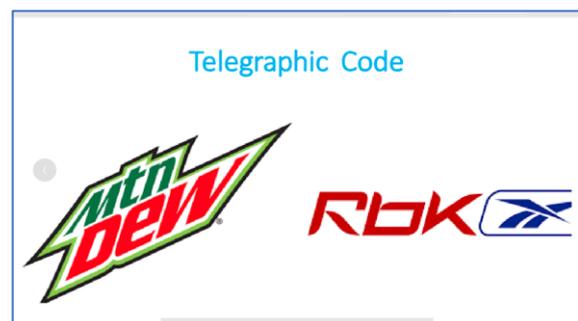
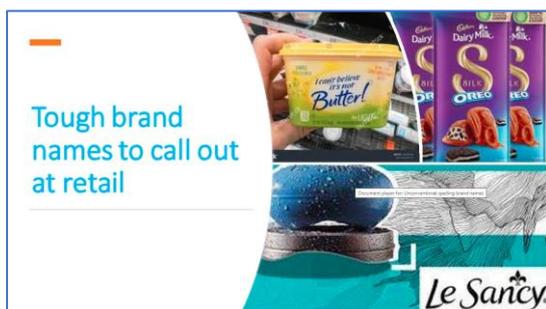
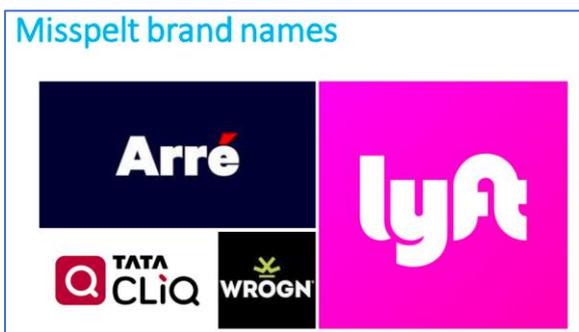
does the consumer ask the retailer for? Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk Oreo is an example. 3. A long brand name like 'I can't believe it's not butter' is another tongue twister, consumers just called it ICBIN.

8. When a brand is in the market for a long time, one can take a telegraphic code approach. Rbk from Reebok and Mtn Dew from Mountain Dew are examples and consumers get this. Some brand name shortening hasn't worked - Scottish Life Aberdeen rebranded as Abrdn and was ridiculed on social media as an old person trying to be with the kids.
9. A lot of research in Phonetics and Orthography is happening in this area. I think we will see many more misspelt names in the future. Unusual spellings carry a risk.
10. This is a trend much like when Apple started a trend by picking fruit as a brand name and we saw a rash of fruit names as brand names like Blackberry, Tangerine Computers, Raspberry pi etc.

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