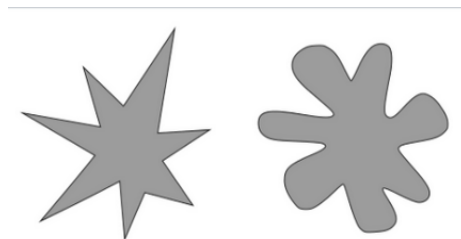


## THE IMPACT OF PHONETIC LANGUAGE TOOLS ON A BRAND NAME DEVELOPMENT

Language is one of the most unique skills of human beings. What do we mean when we say “language”? It is a systematic method of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks, that have a certain meaning. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, stated: “Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts”. [1]

Phonetics plays here an important role.

Let us see the role of phonetics using a popular example – take a look at the pictures below:



The pictures of Kiki/Bouba effect

Carefully consider the image of two figures, as you see – one of them is angular and the other is rounded. One is called Kiki and the other one - Bouba. Now, using your intuition, try to guess who is who. According to the statistics, the overwhelming majority will say, that the left one is Kiki and the right one – Bouba. There is a logical explanation, why the influence of sounds has a great effect on our mind. The results of our research will prove it.

Phonetics studies speech and the sounds of language. It has its own classification. To put it simple, we have two groups – vowels and consonants.

**Sound classification table**

<b>Vowels:</b>			
<b>Place:</b>	<b>Front</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Back</b>
	i	e, a	o, u
<b>Consonants:</b>			
<b>Place:</b>	<b>Front</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Back</b>
	j, f, b, m, s	t, l, n, r	y, g, k, h
<b>Air flow:</b>	<b>Fricatives</b>	<b>Explosives</b>	
	f, v	p, b	
<b>Voice:</b>	<b>Voiced</b>	<b>Silent</b>	
	v, b, g	f, p, k	

Though, our emotions and thoughts also highly depend on the all these sounds. The relation between them is now arbitrary and can be understood universally across different languages.

Thereby:

Voiced sounds induce the semantic impressions of power, activity, dynamism. So, Valium creates a better expectation solid performance than Talium.

Silent sounds, on the other hand, are associated with slowness and heaviness. Philips – although the company is engaged in innovation, its name does not promise you rapid responses.

Front vowels are perceived as more miniature, lightweight, brighter, feminine, light-colored – Instagram is the best example.

Back vowels are more significant, darker, graver, masculine – as Uber, Olympus.

Sound symbolism is a type of linguistics that explains the link between letters or words and their meaning. It means that some words or sounds are spoken as if they represent certain concepts. Example – the word “bouncy”. When people pronounce it, they use a particular rhythm – it goes down through the first syllable “boun” and then goes up again, through the 2 syllable “cy”. This down-up rhythm you get is representative of the meaning of the word. Also, this phenomenon affects our sensory system. Those words are called ideophones. Bright examples are words “legato” and “staccato”. The first one represents something even-surfaced, where all the syllables slide into each other. In contrast the word “staccato” - short and detached.

Another type of sound symbolism is about the automatic size association we place on different vowels. Sounds such as ‘i’ or ‘e’ are often associated with small and sharp, while sounds ‘u’ or ‘o’ are often related to something big and blunt. For example, preferences for a knife with the brand name ‘tiddip’ were higher than when the brand name was ‘toddip’. That’s exactly how the “Kiki-Bouba” effect works. The articulation makes a great impact on our senses, which creates a connection with images.

A row of works is focused on the order of the sounds in a word, in terms of their place of articulation. The articulation direction effect suggests that when a brand name starts with back sounds and ends with front sounds, the articulation of the word resembles food rejection (spitting) and this projects on reactions to the brand name. For example, brand such as Gucci. Conversely, when a brand name starts from front sounds and ends with back sounds, articulation of the name resembles swallowing food and may positively influence attitudes towards the brand – Bentley, Sony. Following a similar cognition explanation, certain sounds activate facial movement that mimics a smile, and this effect makes consumers more likely to help and act pro-socially towards people with names containing these sounds.

Investigating environmental marketing and the way brand name sounds can influence perceptions of a product’s environmental friendliness, we can find out that brand names for green products that consist of silent consonants (Sokat, where all three consonants are silent) convey environmental friendliness to a greater extent than if they contain voiced consonants (Zogad, where all three consonants are voiced). The main reason for these effects is that the low pitch vibration of voiced consonants transmits signals of dominance, threat and aggressiveness to our brain, whereas the high frequency of silent consonants conveys calmness, mildness and harmlessness.

Summarizing previous studies, we identified two groups – vowels and consonants. Both are present in the names of certain brands and have a certain impact on perception.

Sound “o” is overrepresented among top brand names, as Starbucks. This sound is a back vowel and means something large and significant. Sound “u” is less common than the previous one – “Samsung”. Also considered uncommon is sound “i” and “e” – “Intel”, where the combination of sounds gives the impression of something bright, light and quick. The most common vowel sound among top brand is an “a” in “Kraft”, “Tesla”, “Amazon”. This also gives the impression of something large-scale, but the influence of silent consonants in Kraft adds more smooth energy in comparison with ‘sl’ in Tesla, which usually appears on words that mean a movement, or the voiced ‘z’ in Amazon, which imitates dominance.

The unusual phonetic structure in brand names (such as ‘ch’, ‘j’ or doubled ‘c’) elicits perceptions that the brand name is more luxury. “Chanel” and “Gucci” are good examples, where we also can see the influence of feminine sounds. The letter ‘x’, meanwhile, is perceived as something quick, business related or even high-tech. It is used in such brands as “Matrix” or “Xiaomi”. The same effect may have the letter ‘j’.

Nasals – sounds that you can make by pinching your nose. There are 3 nasal sounds – m, n, ng. “Nike”. This sounds typically convey a sense of closeness, casualness or warmth, as they are produced by the sound resonating in the nasal cavity.

We have conducted a survey among the 17-20 year old students of the School of Business of BSU to find out how well this theory works in practice. The survey consisted of four questions with several answer options. We used different combinations of sounds to see how it will affect the perception:

1) Read two words below and choose one that in your opinion best suits the advertisement of knives: a) tiddip; b) toddip;

– The best brand name for knives advertisement is “Tiddip” – 65.7 % of respondents have chosen it.

2) What is your associations with the name of unknown brand Glissado: a) luxurious; b) authority; c) technology;

– The non-existent brand “Glissado” is associated with something luxurious – 68.6 %

3) Which letter below you can associate with something dark and grave: a) b; b) i; c) u;

– The gravest and darkest letter among ‘b’, ‘i’ and ‘u’ is ‘u’ – 54.3 %

4) Based on sounds alone, which of brand names do you think would be associated with a high-tech product: a) Lumidim; b) Djentra; c) Julux;

– Based on sound alone, the best name for a high-tech is “Julux” – 48.6 % of respondent would prefer it.

Thus, the phonetics plays a significant role in brands success due to differences in our sound perception. This experiment suggests that, across languages, the human brain associates certain sounds and the place of articulation with certain images.

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