ABSTRACT


Consumers view a brand as an essential part of a product. A brand not only could add value to a product, but also attract worldwide attention to a discovery. *Lexicon Branding* classifies brands into five categories, namely the “constructed”, “typical”, “invented”, “classical”, and “compressed”. Specifically, a brand name is composed of phonemes. Based on phonosemantic view, phonemes have meanings. They suggest underlying attribute qualities of a product. Therefore, to reveal the hidden messages that a brand name conveys, a phonosemantic analysis can be applied.

This study aims to categorize US brand names listed in *Best Global Brands 2006* based on *Lexicon Branding*’s categorization. In addition, the phonosemantic features of the US brand names are also identified. In giving a phonosemantic analysis, I consult with *A Dictionary of English Sound* compiled by Margaret Magnus (1999). As I took a lot of interest in the meaning of sounds, a qualitative approach was used in this study.

Thirty (30) brand names were selected using purposive sampling. The 30 samples passed two criteria. First, the brand names whose country of origin is United States. The second is the US brand names without proper names.

Twenty-four (24) brand names can be classified into *Lexicon Branding*’s categorizations. Two new categories, the “adapted” and “toponym”, are established to accommodate the remaining six brand names. The “constructed” category has the most brands. Constructing seems to be the most favorable way in naming brands. Compressing as the second most favorable way may possibly indicate marketers’ preference to have shorter names for their brands. On the other hand, the “invented” category has the least brands.

Phonosemantic analysis of twenty-one (21) US brand names sorted by sector in *Best Global Brands 2006* reveals one significant finding. Despite the fact that the composing phonemes could be different, the brands under the same sector are highly likely to communicate the same desirable attribute qualities. Different phonemes may have same the phonemes, or in other words, different sounds may have the same associated meanings.

Keywords: brand, phoneme, phonology, phonesthemes, phonetics, phonosemantics or sound symbolism