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Is It Legal? – Indecent Naming With Tradition

By Wolfgang Nedobity

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When Mitsubishi launched a new car with the name „Pajero" on the Spanish market, it became obvious very soon that the name chosen was not optimal because it immediately was the subject of jokes due to its homophony with a Spanish expression related to masturbation.

The same happened to Ford's model „Pinto"(Portuguese for male genital) in Brazil where it was quickly renamed into „Corcel"(horse).

There is quite a long list of product names that give food to the dirty mind be they chosen accidentally or deliberately. Obviously there seems to be a kind of tradition for this in the history of naming which originally started with place names.

Some of our ancestors obviously were too innocent to realize what burden they place on their offspring when naming places like Pratts Bottom (Kent), Brown Willy (Cornwall), Lickey End (near Birmingham), Booby Dingle (Powys), Great Cockup (Cumbria). Even places such as Thong (Kent) seem to have revealed far too much for not being the victim of lewd remarks.

The European continent, however, is also challenging the innocent mind of the English speaking travellers. In Southern Bavaria they will come across a village with the name of "Petting" and about eleven miles from there, in neighbouring Upper Austria, the shock might be inevitable when they enter the village of "Fucking". In spite of the fact that the inhabitants of Fucking have had enough with English-speaking tourists swiping their sign, they refuse to change their name. It goes back to the ancient Bavarian settlement and although this area was christianized by Irish and Scottish monks in the 9th and 10th century, an amendment of the name has never been deemed necessary.

No wonder that in many countries there are restrictions regarding the choice of a place name as a trademark for goods and services. One way around these restrictions is to distort the name so that it becomes indisputable but on a subliminal level takes advantage of the fact that sex sells. A recent

example of successful distortion are the products of a British based fashion retailer called French Connection Group plc with the trademark FCUK. Linguists tell us that the power of a word depends on its context, and clearly the English word "fuck" falls into that category. To make it even more explicit, two new fragrances were launched named "FCUK Him" and "FCUK Her". On its website, FCUK demonstrates a clear picture of its marketing strategy. Whereas the linguistic allusions are close to Shakespeare's bawdiness, the images remain subdued and innocent, which on the one hand is rather cynical but on the other hand tries to bridge the generation gap because most parents finance the quite conventional fashion attire that their children obtain from FCUK. Thus FCUK's clients in each major market display a range of attitudes when confronted with the provocatively distorted four-letter mark. The American Family Association (AFA) promotes initiatives against FCUK such as prefabricated emails protesting against the exploitation of youngsters in such a manner.

Sex in marketing is bound to raise demand along with a few eyebrows which in addition either secure the necessary publicity or ban the product from the market. Branding an almost swear word in order to

create a cash cow is, however, not restricted to fashion clothing and related products. On a recent visit to New Orleans I was surprised by the abundance of labels for their traditional hot pepper sauces. Besides the well known Tobasco, there are more spicy brand names such as "Burning rectum" or "Hot shit".

It shows that name design must be ready to apply wit to anything that makes the blood boil and the label sell. Obviously this does not really work with other economic fields, for instance with tourism, because the places mentioned above are not among the hot spots that travel agents propagate in their catalogues.

Wolfgang Nedobity is terminologist and CEO of NameDesigner. More info at

Baby Name Story: Fyodor – Given by God

By Elmar Alex

Baby Name Story: Fyodor – Given by God by Elmar Alex

It's always a lot of thinking when you need to choose the name for your baby. There are many good names but this makes the task still harder. Some people can't explain why they've named their baby so, but the others tell you exciting stories about choosing baby names. I collect these stories and here's one of my collection.

It is believed there's something mysterious about naming a baby and that the name can determine the future of the child. That's why some parents try to find out the meaning of the names before choosing one. Often a baby is named after the great person - the King or President, Olympic champion or movie star.

In Russia there's a tradition to name the first-born son after his grandfather. This makes the naming

process somewhat easier if the family follows this tradition.

Pavel Medvedev, an engineer from St.Petersburg, Russia, and a father of three sons tells this story.

"My name is Pavel. I was named after my grandfather according to our family tradition to call a first-born son after his grandfather. Now, my father's name is Mikhail and I thought I would call my son after him - Mikhail.

"The problem was that my wife asked me to name our son after HER father, i.e. my father-in-law. Well, I had to yield (after all it was her who borne our baby, so she deserved to name him) and we called our son Vitaly - after my father-in-law.

"Now the problem was that my wife didn't want any more children. For the next ten years I tried to persuade her to have one more baby. When I managed to do so and our second son was born I naturally called him Mikhail - after my father to follow the family tradition.

"Now, everybody was happy and satisfied. Neither my wife nor I wanted more children, but suddenly 18 months later the third son was born. Actually, we didn't plan to have him but this smart guy appeared notwithstanding! Well, there's a fallacy that a nursing woman can't get pregnant. I think many couples make the same mistake. At least whenever I see children of whom one is a year older than the other (like our second and third sons) I think their parents thought that way.

"We did a lot of thinking to name the third son and then suddenly I said he would be called Fyodor. Neither my wife nor I had relatives or ancestors with this name and everybody was surprised and unhappy with my idea. But I insisted because I was absolutely sure that it was the right name for the boy. Later on I found in the book describing baby names meanings that Fyodor means "given by God". Indeed the boy was given by God. All our relatives later on agreed I had made the right choice.

Q - Pavel, you say this son was given by God. But don't you think any baby is given by God?

A - Oh, yes, of course. But people believe they can plan their family: how many children to have, when to get them born, even to choose if it will be a boy or a girl. Fyodor was absolutely out of planning. God decided for us that we would have him. And something interesting that I didn't know the meaning of the name when I thought he would be called Fyodor. But the meaning of the name proved to be just to the point.

El Alex collects information about baby names and baby name stories all over the world. His collection is big and still growing. He is a father of three boys. People gladly tell him their stories. If you have an interesting baby name story please send it to him. Russian baby names can be found at <http://russian-baby-names.com> To subscribe to his Baby Names Stories Newslettermailto:story@russian-baby-names.com?subject=subscribe

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