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GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AS BRANDS¹

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Abstract: *The process of geographical naming identifies a specific place and feature by applying a distinctive label – a toponym – to it. But the resulting toponym may itself then become a source of names, particularly in the sphere of brand promotion. This paper briefly outlines the processes involved in creating toponyms, then shows in some detail how the names of airlines, airports, urban areas, institutions and many items of everyday life, as well as some personal names, owe their origins to geographical names.*

Key words: *Toponyms, brand names, country names, urban names, institutional & cultural names*

1. CREATING TOPONYMS

Geographical naming is an age-old activity, arising from the human need to identify a specific place or feature by applying a distinctive label to it. One of the most comprehensive and enduring classifications of the naming process was compiled in the 1970s by the American toponymist George Stewart, who identified the following categories of toponym, simplified here for the purposes of this present paper (STEWART 1975):

- Descriptive: the name describes the nature or quality of the place or feature (*eg* Red River);
- Associative: the name incorporates a feature found at the location, such as some particular flora or fauna (*eg* Wood Creek);
- Possessive: the name is possessive in form (*eg* Smith's Hill);
- Incident-related: the name evokes some incident which once took place at the location, such as a landslide or a drowning (*eg* Accident Inlet);

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- Commemorative: the name evokes a person (*eg* Sydney) or historic event (*eg* Independence) not necessarily directly related to the location;
- Manufactured: the name is contrived (*eg* Soweto, derived from South-West Town);
- Of erroneous origin: the name is based on an error of perception (*eg* Catoche, Mexico, where explorers misunderstood a local-language word meaning ‘welcome’, believing it to be the name of the place);
- Transferred names: transferring either an endonym (*eg* Manchester from the UK to the US), or an exonym (*eg* Vienna from Austria to the US).

2. USING TOPONYMS AS BRAND NAMES

In all of the above naming methods, it is clear that the process involves the perception of a place or feature – a referent – and its provision with a label or identity. But, very importantly, the story of toponymy does not end at that point. Once a toponym is applied to a referent, that toponym may itself become a source of names. Having projected an identity on to a place by bestowing it with a name, that name can in its own right become a source of identity, particularly in the sphere of brand promotion, commerce and marketing. Here, the onomastician Paula Sjöblom has distinguished three types of commercial name (AINIALA et al 2012: 214):

- Company names, which identify the company;
- Product names, which identify the products of a company;
- Brand names, which identify the family of products of a company.

A name such as a toponym is important in any or all of these fields because “it identifies its referent, singles it out, makes it unique, and distinguishes it from all others” (AINIALA et al 2012: 211). And of course if a company wishes to advertise and market a product, it makes sense to use a name with positive connotations in order to project an appealing image. Sjöblom notes that brand names in particular need to be short (perhaps acronymic) and easy for customers to remember and pronounce (AINIALA et al 2012: 246). She also makes the important point that:

A brand is an image of added value we can speak about the building of a brand: the foundation is a name (normally a name of a company or trade mark) on top of which, as if brick by brick, stories that produce added value, different experiences based on the senses, emotions and so on are constructed. Success in building a brand and keeping the brand afloat all comes down to how durable the building materials are (AINIALA et al 2012: 245).

Other authors have similarly pointed out that in order to act successfully as brand names, toponyms must *inter alia* be simple, distinctive, memorable, meaningful and evocative (MEDWAY & WARNABY 2014). The need for brand authenticity and brand coherence has also been noted (TREGEAR & GORTON 2005: pp408-09). The toponym may not necessarily be directly present, but instead may be indirectly represented by a symbol or logo, as on some aircraft (see below).

3. COUNTRY NAMES AS NATIONAL BRANDS

Some of the most notable branding of geographical names is in fact not commercial, but national. It is natural that colonial territories, on achieving independence, should wish to throw off many of the symbols of their colonial era. Nowhere is this more immediately visible than in country names, as illustrated by this partial list of African countries:

<u>Colonial name</u>	<u>Current name</u>	<u>Date of change</u>
Basutoland	Lesotho	1966, on independence
Bechuanaland	Botswana	1966, on independence
Gold Coast	Ghana	1957, on independence
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia	1964, on independence
Nyasaland	Malawi	1964, on independence
Southern Rhodesia	Zimbabwe	1980, on independence
Swaziland	Eswatini	2018, 50 years after independence in 1968

Country names frequently provide the toponyms for the purposes of branding in the airline industry, an industry in which vast sums of money are spent on creating appropriate brand images. The image may be achieved either directly through the toponym itself (*eg* Singapore Airlines), or indirectly through the use of a related and unmistakable national symbol such as a national flag (*eg* Aeroflot). Some airlines feature both the toponym and the symbol (*eg* Air Canada and the maple leaf). Airlines featuring a national name or symbol (either exact or stylised) include the following major carriers:

- Aer Lingus national symbol
- Aeroflot stylised national flag
- Air Canada country name + national symbol
- Air France country name + stylised national flag
- Air India country name
- Air Malta country name + national symbol
- Air New Zealand country name + national symbol
- British Airways country name (adjectival form) + stylised national flag
- Emirates country name (abbreviated) + stylised national flag
- Icelandair country name
- Korean Air country name (adjectival form) + national symbol
- Singapore Airlines country name
- South African Airways country name (adjectival form) + stylised national flag
- Swiss country name (adjectival form) + national flag
- Thai country name (adjectival form)
- Turkish Airlines country name (adjectival form)

One significant factor has remained true since the very beginnings of commercial flight. In order to increase the international profile of an industry which is itself international in nature, many national airlines from non-English-speaking countries make use of the English language in the most visible aspects of their branding. This is true, for example, of Korean Air, Swiss, Thai, and Turkish Airlines, all of which use English exclusively. Other airlines use dual-script branding, though they do so in different ways. Air India practises transliteration, adopting a logo with the name 'Air India' in both Roman and Devanagari scripts (the Devanagari version is simply a

transliteration of the English-language version). Emirates, on the other hand, practises translation, using the true Arabic-language form الإمارات (which transliterates as Al Imārāt) in a stylised form in its Arabic-script version, alongside the translated equivalent ‘Emirates’. The Russian airline Aeroflot uses both the Roman-script ‘Aeroflot’ and the Cyrillic-script ‘Аэрофлот’, though the two forms are never seen side-by-side on the same aeroplane. It is noteworthy that, in an industry whose very nature is international and indeed globalised, national symbols should continue to hold sway in the manner that they do (THURLOW & AIELLO 2007).

The branding of country names may also be undertaken for the purposes of tourism, as shown by the clever highlighting of the four-letter sequence <L-O-V-E> within the country name ‘Slovenija’ (Slovenia) in material disseminated by that country’s tourism organisations². It is interesting to note that, in order to enhance global recognition, it is an English language word (‘love’) which has been extracted from the Slovenian language country name. And the high value of country names as brand names is also shown in the field of Internet domains. There is a certain cachet attached to having one’s country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) written in a fashion that is suggestive of the country name. It is for this reason that the United Kingdom registered the code <.uk> as its top-level domain, conscious that the country is less well served visually by the two-alpha code <GB> allotted to it many years ago by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

4. TOPONYMS IN AIRPORT NAME BRANDING

The branding of airports, as well as airlines, is highly significant. Considerable thought needs to go into making a decision on an airport name, for the name has to satisfy two distinct communities. One is the local population, who need to feel that the chosen name involves them in the business of the airport. The other is the wider national and international community – those whom the airport wishes to attract from outside – so the name should ideally be internationally recognisable as belonging to the location in question. A small airfield located about ten miles north-west of Newcastle upon Tyne in England, which began life as a civilian aerodrome with a single hangar in the 1950s, was initially named ‘Woolsington’ after the nearest small village. In the seven decades since then, this airfield has grown exponentially into a sizeable and vibrant airport with many domestic and international flights to Europe and beyond. The name ‘Woolsington’ clearly did not provide sufficient status for such an airport, and so the name was upgraded, first to ‘Newcastle’, and subsequently to ‘Newcastle International’. This most recent name still fairly represents the local community, but also provides sufficient international recognition, since Newcastle is a city well established on the global map.

In the East Midlands of England, roughly equidistant between the cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, lies an airport which – like Newcastle – has seen an increase in its profile and visibility. Again, the airport was originally named after the nearest village, in this case Castle Donington. But, as with Newcastle, this name was inadequate for the anticipated growth. It needed to be changed, but this proved to be a problem. The strategy of naming an airport after the nearest globally significant city proved impossible in this instance, since all three proximate cities are of roughly equal

² See for example <https://www.slovenia.info/en>

weight, and to have chosen the name of one would have been invidious. In the end the straightforward regional name ‘East Midlands’ was chosen. This particular airport has built a fair measure of subsequent success on budget flights for British tourists, so the fact that its name is somewhat vague in terms of international recognition has not proved to be a problem.

Located between two major cities in Yorkshire – Leeds and Bradford – the small but growing Yeadon airport faced a dilemma similar to that of Castle Donington; as growth expanded, a new name would be required, but once again it would have been invidious for the airport to choose the name of one nearby city rather than another. In this case, however, Yeadon opted not to choose an alternative regional name such as ‘West Yorkshire’, but instead adopted the names of both neighbouring cities together, and the airport is now branded as ‘Leeds Bradford’.

This upgrading of airport name from village name to the name of a city or region is a fairly common phenomenon in Britain. The fact that airports originally had village names reflects the situation around the time of the Second World War, when many airstrips and small airfields (especially in eastern lowland areas, nearest to Nazi-occupied continental Europe) lay adjacent to small villages, and the name of the nearest village was accordingly the obvious label for each of these airfields to adopt. Today, however, airport names need to be more relevant to the international community flying in, rather than – as was the case hitherto – to the local community flying out, and for that reason they now usually reflect a major well-known landmark. Examples of former airfields which are significant today as airports, and for which the toponymic branding process originated with a village name, include:

- Castle Donington → East Midlands
- Dyce → Aberdeen → Aberdeen International
- Elmdon → Birmingham → Birmingham International
- Hurn → Bournemouth
- Turnhouse → Edinburgh
- Woolsington → Newcastle → Newcastle International
- Yeadon → Leeds Bradford

5. TOPONYMS IN URBAN BRANDING

A city may choose to advertise itself with a brand that involves the use of its own name. This type of urban toponymic branding can be seen to great effect in relation to Dubai, which has cleverly devised a logo that combines both the Roman-script and Arabic-script forms of the name into one single and very effective brand symbol (see for example TRAVELPULSE 2014). Copenhagen has designed a series of lapel buttons, each using the four-letter sequence <O-P-E-N> found within the name ‘Copenhagen’, which is intended to form a welcoming symbol with the message that the city is open to all-comers. The lapel buttons appear in a range of options with a variety of attractive sub-themes identified, such as ‘Open for You’, ‘Open for Connections’, ‘Open for Change’, ‘Open for Tolerance, and ‘Open for Development’³. Again, it is significant that, for the purposes of global recognition, both the name of origin (Copenhagen) and the derived word (‘open’) are in the English language.

³ See for example

http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/something_is_button_in_the_sta.php#.VfqBaHmFPcs

As with airports, cities too may sometimes require re-branding as their functions mutate. We have remarked already on the global renown of Newcastle upon Tyne, situated on the north bank of the River Tyne, but immediately across the river from Newcastle lies a separate large town – Gateshead – which has traditionally languished behind its better-known neighbour in terms of prosperity and significance. As the locally traditional industries of mining and shipbuilding collapsed towards the end of the twentieth century, efforts were made to revitalise the entire riverbank by constructing new cultural developments such as the Sage concert hall and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. However, both these developments are in fact located on the south bank of the Tyne, in hitherto neglected Gateshead. Suddenly, therefore, Gateshead acquired the potential to become something of a cultural rival to Newcastle. The response of the regional authorities has been to develop a new semi-official urban entity, astride both the river and the traditional administrative boundaries, which they have called ‘NewcastleGateshead’ [*sic*]. This has been described as a “branded relational space” in which “branding, here interpreted as collective strategy-making, goes beyond mere communication and fosters an institutionalisation of the branded space, thus influencing the way in which local development is spatially and strategically conceived” (PASQUINELLI 2014: 727).

The brand name used by the new arts centre in Gateshead – ‘Baltic’ – perhaps requires some further explanation. The building in question began life as the Baltic Flour Mills, one of several mills in the United Kingdom used for the processing of grain and named after the great seas of the world. It became known colloquially simply as ‘the Baltic’. When the requirement for milling disappeared in the 1980s, the building became derelict until its reincarnation as an arts centre in the following decade. All this time, however, the original name ‘BALTIC FLOUR MILLS’ had remained prominently displayed in large lettering on the building, and this iconic feature has sensibly been retained, with this milling heritage incorporated into the online URL of the arts centre⁴. To the outsider, it might appear that Gateshead is claiming some direct connection with the Baltic region of northern Europe, but this is not the case. The name ‘Baltic’ in this instance is simply a neutral label.

Urban branding across the administrative boundary formed by the River Tyne proved relatively uncontroversial, but difficulties can arise if the area earmarked for branding crosses international boundaries. In the spring of 2015, the mayor of the city of Copenhagen, capital of Denmark, announced his intention to create a brand entity called ‘Greater Copenhagen’, comprising the Danish island of Sjælland (which includes the city of Copenhagen) and the southern Swedish province of Skåne; entities already physically linked by the road and rail bridge across the straits between the two countries. The idea is to create a super-region with a common identity and a high-visibility profile which would “mobilise their assets, populations and amenities” in order to become “a magnet for investment and innovation” (GUARDIAN 2015). Some in Sweden favour the plan too, particularly since the main Swedish city affected – Malmö – currently has spare capacity, but others fear that the metropolitan gain might come at the expense of a loss of regional identity for the more rural areas of Skåne. The question of a brand name for such an area, were it to come to fruition, is unresolved; ‘Greater Copenhagen’ would not be popular in Sweden, where the preference might be

⁴: <http://www.balticmill.com>

for ‘Scandinavia Bay Area’, though this label projects a far less focused identity. The name of the connecting straits might be a solution, though this too is problematic: Øresund is the Danish spelling, while the Swedish spelling is Öresund – and in any case for the purposes of global recognition some consider it advisable to avoid words containing letters which do not occur in the standard A-Z alphabetical inventory.

Branding by association – whereby a town or city attaches to itself a sobriquet incorporating the name of a different and more globally renowned location – is another frequently employed strategy designed to attract investment and visitors. In this manner, several cities in northern Europe, most notably Stockholm, are happy to be known as ‘the Venice of the North’, while the city of Timișoara in Romania deploys the sobriquet ‘Little Vienna’ for the same purpose (VESELON & CREȚAN 2019).

Urban branding need not be official, driven by top→down pressures, as we have seen in the case of ‘NewcastleGateshead’; nor need it be semi-official, as with ‘Little Vienna’. It may instead be a bottom→up initiative, with a slightly mischievous or even anarchic slant to it. The rather unprepossessing urban area of Halle-Neustadt in Germany, created in the 1960s as an extension to the early mediaeval city of Halle, is colloquially known to its inhabitants by the first syllable of each element of the name: HaNeu (PLATTENPORTAL 2020). In the German language, this is pronounced in the same way as ‘Hanoi’, the capital city of Vietnam. Indeed, there are many ways in which cities can be branded (see for example the case of Turku, Finland: SJÖBLOM & HAKALA 2018).

Branding can involve areas within cities, too, for example if property developments take place and estate agents wish to market a particular area. The names Fitzrovia and Canary Wharf, in London, are both toponyms of recent creation designed to cover newly discrete areas, and they have been chosen with a view to appearing attractive in the property market (LONDONIST 2012 & 2015). Estate agents have also been active in the United States, as for example in Oakland, California, where they have attempted to rebrand the North Oakland–Berkeley–Emeryville area as NOBE, and the Koreatown–Northgate area as KONO (EAST BAY EXPRESS 2018). Large technology companies have also made rebranding efforts: in announcing the location for their new site in northern Virginia, Amazon have attempted to introduce for it the name ‘National Landing’ (BLOOMBERG CITYLAB 2018), while in 2017 Google Maps arbitrarily removed the names of three established San Francisco neighbourhoods – Rincon Hill, Folsom and Transbay – and replaced them with ‘The East Cut’, to the bemusement of local residents (THE CONVERSATION 2019). Rincon Hill was subsequently reinstated on this source.

6. TOPONYMS IN INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL BRANDING

The use of logos as substitutes for toponyms in the branding process is not uncommon. At the macro-level, the United Nations uses a simple globe as its logo, signifying that its brand encompasses ‘the World’ in its entirety. At a more local level, a business or institution located in a particular city may latch on to a well-known symbol of that city and adopt that symbol for its own use in an attempt to enhance its prestige. For example, the German Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (*Institut für Strategie- Politik- Sicherheits- und Wirtschaftsberatung*), based in Berlin, cleverly uses the Brandenburg Gate as the

defining feature in its logo, with the six pillars of the Gate conveniently forming a natural repository for the five initial letters of the institute's title: ISPSW⁵.

Sometimes the brand outgrows the restricted geographical area suggested by its name. For example, the NatWest bank in the United Kingdom, where the 'West' element of the title refers to Westminster (in London), has long outgrown any specific relevance to that small area. The international banking corporation HSBC, where the 'H' refers to Hong Kong and the 'S' to Shanghai, has similarly outgrown its original limited geographical scope (although its headquarters remains in Hong Kong). And, on occasion, a brand name becomes so well known that it survives a spelling change of the original toponym that gave birth to it; hence Peking University has retained this name even though the more commonly used Roman-script name Beijing has superseded use of Peking in almost all other contexts.

Branding also becomes very important in certain cultural contexts. Sports arenas must choose a name which satisfies the aspirations of the local community, and that name may reflect the place in which the arena and community are located. Fratton Park is an example of this in England; here a somewhat mundane urban toponym, relating to a park, has given its name to the stadium of Portsmouth football club. Hence mention of 'Fratton Park' will conjure up among the imagined community of football followers not the original referent – the park – but the football stadium. It is the specificity that really matters; a cultural festival as such is unlikely to make many headlines, whereas the exclusivity of the Cannes Film Festival or Edinburgh International Festival denotes a brand of international repute which will make headlines globally. Adding the toponym to the title adds value, as well as specificity, to the occasion.

Toponymic branding may also involve the addition of a new element to a place name in an attempt to enhance the prestige of the location concerned. In 1938, the German town of Wittenberg recognised its heritage in relation to the sixteenth century religious reformer Martin Luther, by rebranding itself as Lutherstadt Wittenberg. In the 1950s the northern Italian village of Breuil decided to advertise its proximity to one of the most iconic peaks of the Alps, the Matterhorn, by rebranding itself as Breuil-Cervinia, where the element 'Cervinia' is based on Monte Cervino, the Italian-language name for the Matterhorn (WOODMAN 2014: 14). It has also been the practice on occasion in the United Kingdom to add an honorary element to a place name if the location has become associated with a royal visit or similar event; such names in England include Bognor Regis (West Sussex), King's Lynn (Norfolk), Lyme Regis (Dorset), Royal Tunbridge Wells (Kent), Royal Leamington Spa (Warwickshire), and more recently Royal Wootton Bassett (Wiltshire).

7. TOPONYMIC BRANDING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Toponyms have also traditionally made their way into the general vocabulary of everyday life. One category which comes very obviously to mind here is that of food and drink; indeed, this category is so well known in terms of branding that only a very few out of a potential multitude of examples need be given here:

⁵ To view the logo, visit the ISPSW homepage: <http://www.ispsw.com/en>

■ Food and Drink

- Hallabong tangerine⁶ *from* Halla-san, South Korea
- Jaffa orange *from* Yafo, Israel
- Parma ham *from* Parma, Italy
- Roquefort cheese *from* Roquefort, France
- Stilton cheese *from* Stilton, England

We are surely all familiar with the mechanism by which a product is tied to its location by means of that location's name. In this way it is possible to create branded designations which are legally protected, such as Parma ham (*prosciutto di Parma*) and Roquefort cheese (*fromage de Roquefort*). The principle behind this protection is to prevent other products from claiming a particular regional specificity (or indeed uniqueness) when in fact their produce originates outside the designated protected area. The European Union distinguishes between products given 'Protected Geographical Indication' (PGI) status and products given 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO) status (see EC 1996). In simple terms, the PGI designation relates to products that are specific to a region (*eg* Scottish beef), while the PDO designation involves products exclusive to a smaller locality (*eg* Orkney beef, Orkney being within Scotland).

But this concept is not always straightforward, as can be illustrated by two of the five examples in the above list. The toponymic element of the fruit name 'Hallabong tangerine' relates to the mountain named Halla-san, which forms the central feature of South Korea's Jeju island. This has traditionally been the locality in Korea in which these tangerines have been produced. But, for reasons of climate change, these fruits are increasingly being produced to the north, on the Korean peninsula itself. Can these mainland tangerines, which are genetically identical to their Jeju counterparts but produced many miles from Halla-san, also be branded as 'Hallabong'? The answer would seem to be 'yes', for in the sense that the name for these tangerines has become simply a label, there should be no problem in retaining the Hallabong moniker for this fruit when it is cultivated on the mainland.

The second illustration involves the protection of the Stilton cheese brand. This particular cheese may legally be named 'White Stilton' or 'Blue Stilton' if it has been produced in one of several villages in a small area within the East Midlands of England. Yet, paradoxically, the village of Stilton itself – although geographically in the same general area, and similarly a producer of generically the same cheese – is not included among those listed villages. Hence, much to the chagrin of those who live in the eponymous village, 'stilton' cheese from the village of Stilton cannot be branded as 'Stilton'.

There are also categories in which toponyms make an appearance in an adapted form. One example of this is the familiar pizza, which appears across the world in a multitude of varieties, with names frequently distinguished by toponyms in an adjectival form, such as *pizza siciliana*, *pizza parmigiana*, *pizza calabrese*, etc. Naturally, many of these toponyms are Italian; the three listed here relate to Sicilia (Sicily), Parma, and Calabria respectively. Here are some examples from two other categories:

⁶ The same fruit is branded as 'dekopon' in Japan. Unlike Halla, 'dekopon' is not a toponym.

■ Carriages

- hackney carriage (a London taxi) *from* Hackney, England
- landau (a stately carriage) *from* Landau, Germany
- limousine (a high-quality car) *from* Limoges, France
- sedan chair (a litter carried by porters) *from* Sedan, France
- surrey (a four-wheeled carriage with partial cover) *from* Surrey, England

■ Clothing and Textiles

- angora (fibre) *from* Angora, a former English exonym for Ankara, Turkey
- calico (textile) *from* Calicut, a former conventional name for Kozhikode, India
- cashmere (fibre) *from* Kashmir, a region in Asia
- damask (fibre) *from* Damascus, the English exonym for Dimashq, Syria
- denim (textile) *from* Nîmes, France ['de Nîmes']
- hessian (fabric) *from* Hesse, a federal state in Germany
- jeans (clothing) *from* Gènes, the French exonym for Genoa, Italy
- jersey (clothing) *from* Jersey, one of the Channel Islands
- nylon (polymer) *from* New York + London ['NY + Lon']
- shantung (silk) *from* Shantung, an old English variant of Shandong, China
- tweed (fabric) *from* the River Tweed, between England and Scotland

The name of the well-known Swedish furniture manufacturer IKEA provides an interesting acronym. The first two constituent letters denote the name of the founder of the company, Ingvar Kamprad, while the final two letters indicate the homestead (Elmtaryd) and village (Agunnaryd) where he was born (AINIALA et al 2012: 248). Thus there is a toponymic element to the company name. But the connection with toponymy by no means ends there, for in a policy which has been described in Denmark as “cultural imperialism”, the names of IKEA products over which one walks (doormats, rugs, carpets) have been selected from Danish toponyms, while the names of more comfortable furnishings are taken from Swedish and Norwegian toponyms. Here is a partial list of categories in the IKEA catalogue (see also QUARTZ 2017):

- upholstered furniture; coffee tables *from* Swedish place names
- beds; wardrobes; hall furniture *from* Norwegian place names
- dining tables; chairs *from* Finnish place names
- bathroom articles *from* Scandinavian hydrographic names
- garden furniture *from* Swedish island names
- carpets; other floor coverings *from* Danish place names

8. FALSE AND INDIRECT TOPONYMIC BRANDING

Not all branding that appears to be toponymic in origin is in fact so. One good example is the internationally renowned confectionery product known as the Mars Bar. This product is not in fact named after the planet Mars in our solar system, but instead takes its name from the American businessman Forrest E Mars, who founded the company that makes this particular chocolate bar. The Mars Bar is an example of false toponymic branding, but there may also be instances of indirect toponymic branding, as in the case of Cremona toffees. These sweets, marketed in the United Kingdom, carry the name of the city of Cremona in Italy, but they have no association with that location. They are in fact named after Cremona Park, an industrial estate near Newcastle upon Tyne where they are manufactured. The industrial estate itself was in all likelihood

named after the Italian city, but there is no direct relationship between that city and this particular item of confectionery.

9. TOPONYMS IN PERSONAL NAME BRANDING

The identity forged from a toponym need not always be commercial. It may on occasion be personal. Individuals may use toponyms to supply their own identity or brand, which others then acknowledge and reflect. This process can be seen in Iran where, according to the traditions of Shia Islam, a cleric who attains the lofty status of ayatollah adopts the name of his place of birth. Hence the child born as Ruhollah Musavi in the village of Khomeyn eventually became Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni (WOODMAN 2014: 17). The humble toponym ‘Khomeyn’ became the source of a personal name of considerable prestige. There are many more examples of this process, as the following passage illustrates:

Similarly, when for the first time citizens of the youthful Turkish republic were obliged to take surnames, following the passage of the 1934 Surnames Law, many looked to toponyms in order to fulfil this new function. The second president of the Republic, Mustafa İsmet, took the surname İnönü to commemorate his role in the battles that had taken place near the town of İnönü during the war of independence. One of Turkey’s early prime ministers, Adnan Menderes, similarly took his surname from a toponym, choosing the river name Menderes (the *Meander* of classical times) in recognition of the role he had played in battles along its course. There may well have been an element of self-aggrandisement in the choices made by these politicians, as there no doubt also was in the case of the Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu, who added the toponym Dej to his name to commemorate – perhaps even to flaunt – the hardship years that he had spent in prison in the town of Dej in Cluj county. But, whether justifiably so or not, all these toponyms – Khomeyn, İnönü, Menderes and Dej – became vital components of the personal identity of these particular individuals (WOODMAN 2014: 17-18).

İNönü, Menderes and Dej have all accorded themselves a brand, through a process that has involved the use of a toponym. For Khomeyni, the ‘branding’ is not something he himself has sought, though the result is equally effective. A related phenomenon occurs in the Arab world, where it is customary for the final element of a personal name to consist of a toponym. Thus the former leader of the Islamist group known as ISIS was named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the final element simply indicating that he came from Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq. One of the originators of the same group was an individual named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the final element of his name indicating that he originated from the town of Al Zarqā’ in Jordan (see also WOODMAN 2014: 18). There is branding of a sort in such names, but it is not self-promotional; this style of personal name-form is simply a part of accepted life in the Arabic language and Arab society.

10. POSSESSION AND NATIONALISM IN TOPONYMIC BRANDING

It has become a largely accepted fact that most toponyms existing grammatically in the possessive form have in fact lost (if indeed they ever contained) any possessive reality. The example of Smith’s Hill in the first section of this paper is a case in point; it is unlikely that anyone would claim that this feature was now in the possession or

ownership of a person named Smith. These grammatically possessive toponyms are not semantically possessive at all; they have become neutral labels which belong to everyone and simply function in the manner of an address. It is for this reason that ‘Newcastle Disease’, an avian virus identified in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1920s, is a term in no sense disparaging towards that city. Nor is ‘Stockholm Syndrome’, a phenomenon in which captives develop empathetic bonds with their captors and named following a hostage-taking crisis in the Swedish capital in 1973, in any way a negative reflection on that city. Neither the name of Newcastle upon Tyne nor that of Stockholm has been sullied or harmfully ‘branded’ by these neutral monikers.

Occasionally, however, authorities choose to see possession in such labels, despite there being none. In August 2015, authorities in South Korea announced the “repatriation” of many plant names that had hitherto borne the names of foreign countries. The principal candidate for renaming was the Asian red pine tree (*Pinus densiflora*), commonly known in the English language as the Japanese red pine, which was now to be known in South Korea as the ‘Korean red pine’. For most neutral observers the name ‘Japanese red pine’ carries little if any specific relationship with Japan, and indeed this pine tree is native to several Asian countries, no more belonging to one of these countries than it does to any other. So to claim it exclusively, and brand it as ‘Korean’, appears as a nationalistic move, an interpretation confirmed by the announcement that these name changes were being made “to mark the nation’s 70th anniversary of Liberation Day” (the “liberation” being from Japanese occupation in 1945) and “to teach correct history to our future generations” (KOREA TIMES 2015).

This démarche demonstrates that toponymic branding can be utilised for purposes that are not exactly innocent, and it reveals how the notorious connection between toponymy and nationalism is sadly always lurking beneath the surface. One guaranteed way to avoid contentiousness in such situations, of course, is to employ universally the well-established Linnaean system of nomenclature, because names in that Latin-language taxonomy provide a neutral and geographically non-partisan method of reference.

11. FINAL THOUGHTS

Geographical names are of course not the only source for branding. Geographical features can play their part, too; even ‘imagined’ features such as lines of latitude. The Scottish writer Malachy Tallack has shown how the 60 degree north line of latitude, in particular, has its own “brand mentality”, which has proved to be an inspirational source of names (such as the ‘60 North’ youth club in his native Shetland Islands), and which has also brought into being an imagined community of those who share this location around the world – in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, as well as in Tallack’s homeland (TALLACK 2015: 2-3). Beyond geography, names of a commercial nature are now being applied with increasing regularity, as seen for example in the continuing commercial branding of sports stadiums around the world. But although the social geographer Reuben Rose-Redwood perhaps correctly believes that this “commercialization of public place-naming systems” will become the branding story of the future (ROSE-REDWOOD 2011: 34), it is probably still the case as of today that geographical names, rather than commercial names, form the basis for the majority of branded toponyms around the globe.

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