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frontlines



it's in the stars—or at least it is in asia...

where celebrities are being hired as marketers for brands from the Pacific Northwestern states. This year, Chinese pop star Jian Tian is advertising the Northwest Cherry Growers' pickings, by filming her MTV video in the Washington orchards and serving as the spokeswoman for the cherries in her own country. Similar marketing endeavors have proved popular in Taiwan, where for the past seven years different music stars have advertised the Northwest fruit. This year, with the focus shifting to China, the model Akemi is serving as the cherries' spokeswoman in Taiwan.

The Northwest Cherry Growers isn't alone in targeting its marketing in Asia. The Washington State Fruit Commission recently partnered with Chateau Ste. Michelle winery to hold a black tie event in Shanghai for 3,0000 people, featuring pop star Shunza.

Promotions such as these work in China and Taiwan, according to B.J. Thurlby, president of the commission, because the markets are gossip-driven with a strong emphasis on magazines and the subways.

And Martin Roll, CEO of VentureRepublic, Singapore, and author of Asian Brand Strategy, pointed to the conformist nature of many Asian societies, which means celebrities can often become aspirational role models.

Language is becoming more international—or it is at least in terms of names. Wakoopa, Renkoo, Eskwela, Squidoo and Woomp could be from any country, although most of these are American. They are the monikers that new companies are selecting for their companies, and the reason tends to be that the URL is available.

The success of Google (so popular that it's become a verb), Yahoo, Amazon and Wikipedia attests to the fact that these nonsensical names can actually lead to a successful company. However, many consultants advise against such a move.

Names that mean nothing need a lot more money and marketing poured into them to get them noticed, according to Anthony Shore, global director of naming and writing for Landor Associates, San Francisco.

And Brad Van Auken, president of Brand Forward in Honeoye, N.Y., says that people want to find a company quickly, so if they can't figure out the spelling they may give up. But Doug Lowell, executive creative director at ID Branding in Portland, Ore., says that an unusual name won't require more marketing clout, because it already stands out and is unique.

a bite of the apple....

Business billionaire, Media Mogul and New York City Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, spent part of December away from the Big Apple in order to meet with business leaders in China and to attend the conference on Climate Change in Bali. Following a speech in Shanghai, Bloomberg offered to field some audience questions. Some in the Bloomberg camp anticipated inquiries about a possible, last-minute presidential run or perhaps the Mayor's views on the affects of the sub-prime mortgage situation. Instead, the opening question at the Shanghai meeting involved the Mayor's cameo appearance in Sex and the City. The incident certainly underscores the global nature of media and entertainment... or perhaps just the world's ceaseless interest in sex, and of course, New York City.

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