

A Note on Selected Brand Names of E-Cigarettes

FRANK NUESSEL

University of Louisville, USA

This brief note has a fourfold purpose: (1) to define the concept of “e-cigarette”; (2) to discuss succinctly collateral aspects of e-cigarettes (product development, health and legal features, linguistic dimensions); (3) to explain the notion of brand name; and (4) to review selectively brand names for e-cigarettes in order to determine the marketing strategies employed. Finally, there is an appendix with a corpus of the selected e-cigarette brand names.

KEYWORDS brand names, e-cigarettes, vape

Introduction

A definition and description of an e-cigarette is in order (Electronic Cigarette, 2014; see Zimmer et al., 2014: 361–362).

An electronic cigarette (e-cig or e-cigarette), personal vaporizer (PV) or electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) is a battery-powered vaporizer which has a similar feel to tobacco smoking. Electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco, although they do use nicotine from tobacco plants. They do not produce cigarette smoke but rather an aerosol, which is frequently but inaccurately referred to as vapor. In general, they have a heating element that atomizes a liquid solution known as e-liquid. E-liquids are usually a mixture of propylene glycol, glycerin, and flavorings. Others have similar ingredients but without nicotine.

Riker and her associates (2012: 159) describe the mechanism of action of an e-cigarette in the following terms:

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that contain cartridges generally filled with nicotine, flavor and other chemicals. Puffing activates a battery-operated heating element in the atomizer and the solution in the cartridge is vaporized and inhaled [...]. Because e-cigarettes do not burn tobacco, they do not emit smoke. Rather, the user inhales and exhales a vapor, also called a plume, fog, or aerosol. Most e-cigarettes are designed to look like traditional cigarettes and simulate the visual, sensory, and behavioral aspects of smoking traditional cigarettes. However, some e-cigarettes look like everyday items such as pens and USB memory sticks that may go unnoticed. E-cigarette cartridges can be

refilled using drops of solution sold in bottles [...]. Pauly and colleagues [2007] described the stated or implied intent of e-cigarettes as reducing toxins in the mainstream and secondhand smoke and helping smokers quit.

Prices for e-cigarettes range from \$20.00 to as much as \$80.00. Thus, their cost is higher than a package of traditional cigarettes, but some are reusable. The product containers are colorful and attractive with artwork that often suggests vapor plumes. These products also come in a wide variety of flavors with enticing names, e.g., “death by chocolate,” “espresso special,” “cool mint menthol,” “vibrant vanilla,” and “cherry culmination.” Zhu et al. (2014) calculated that there were 7764 flavors for all brands with approximately 242 new flavors added monthly.

Herbert A. Gilbert is credited as the inventor of the e-cigarette (also known as an electronic cigarette, e-cig, e-cigarette, personal vaporizer, or electronic nicotine delivery system [ENDS]) by virtue of his 1965 patent for a prototype device filed on April 17 1963 and published on August 17 1965 (see Figure 1, Patent, 2014; see also A History of E-Cigarette Brands, 2014 for a discussion of the evolution of the delivery systems).

The ever-increasing use of e-cigarettes has prompted researchers to investigate two specific areas: (1) the effect of this product on health; and (2) the regulation of the use of this product (Dutra and Glantz, 2014; Giovenco et al., 2014; Maziak, 2014; Pauly et al., 2007; Riker et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2014; Zyoud et al., 2014).

Because of their relative novelty, the legal status of these devices has not been firmly established. Nevertheless, there are regulations in some nations and in some parts of the US concerning their use (Legal Status of Electronic Cigarettes, 2014). These statutes include the prohibition of sales to people under the age of eighteen, place of use, place of sale, and so forth. Riker and her colleagues (2012: 160) have noted that these products appeared in the European markets in 2006 and in the US in 2007. They also point out that the US Food and Drug Administration raised concerns about product safety and marketing to those under the age of eighteen via the Internet and mall kiosks. Furthermore, their increased popularity has led to an increasing growth in the number of shops dedicated to the sale of the delivery systems and the products such as flavors. Finally, these e-cigarette emporia often have appealing names and an inviting atmosphere designed to attract an appreciative clientele often aimed at younger adults. These shops have accoutrements such as neon fixtures, eye-catching display units, and alluring artwork (not unlike the head shops of the 1960s). Selected local store designations include trendy store names such as “Lizard Juice E-Cigarette,” “Purple Haze,” “Vic’s Vapes,” “Good Times Tobacco,” “Vapor Lab Outer Loop — Vape Shop,” “Juice Box Vapor Company,” “Simply Vapors,” “Upn Smoke,” and “Electric Ladyland” — all designed to appeal to a youthful age cohort. Highly specialized stores known as “vaporias” cater to e-cigarette devotees. These mechanisms are also widely available at gas stations and convenience stores. Since 2010, the vaping subculture fans also participate in “vape meets” where new products are highlighted. The appeal of e-cigarettes to a much younger clientele has been confirmed by recent research reported in *The New York Times* (Tavernise, 2015: A-3; cf. Centers for Disease Control, 2015), which shows that the use of e-cigarettes has tripled among high school students between 2013 and 2014.

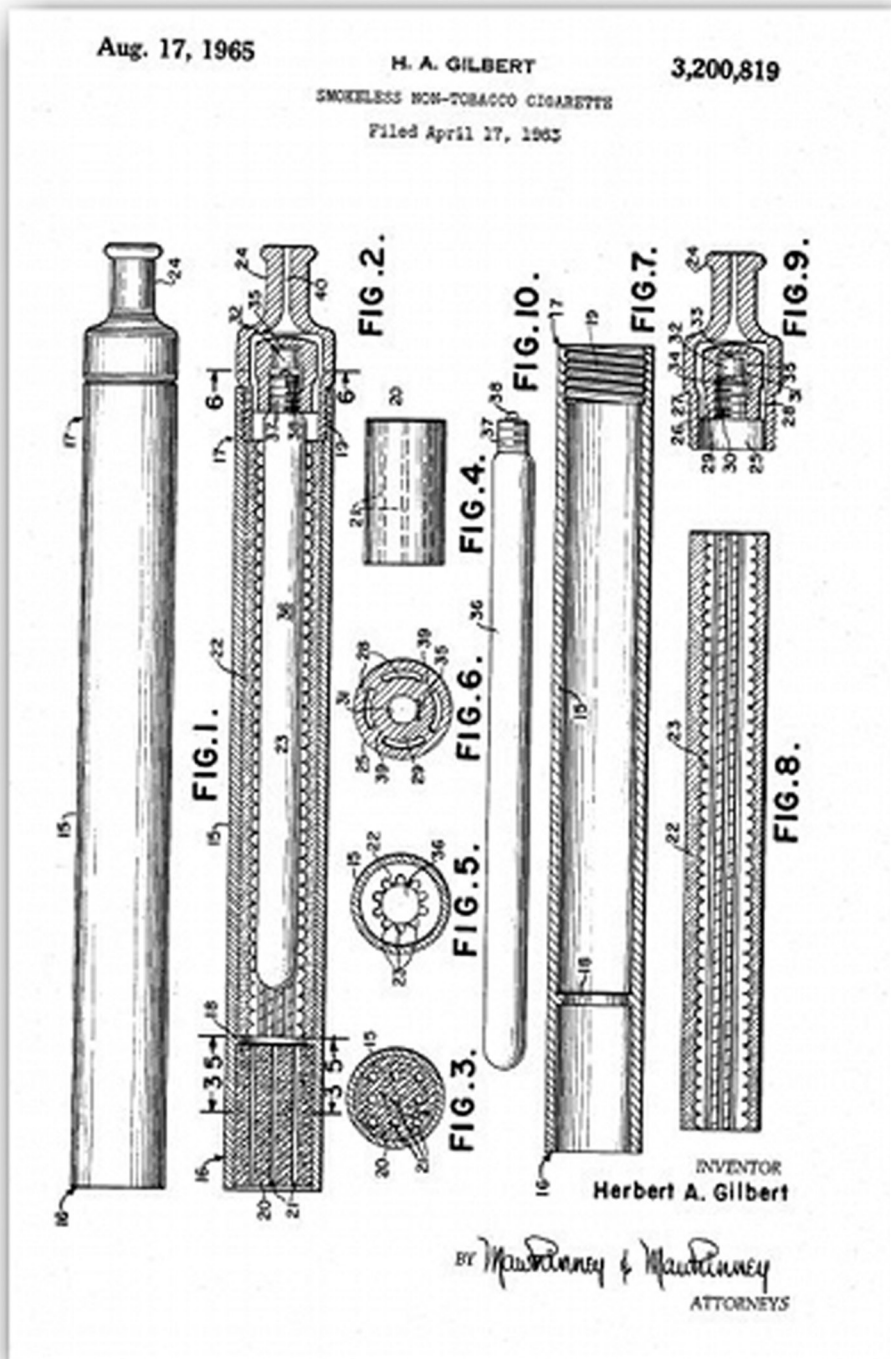


FIGURE 1 Patent for electronic cigarette (1965; Patent 2014).

In their essay on the use of websites as a medium for advertising e-cigarettes, Grana and Ling (2014: 397–398; see also Yamin et al., 2010) point out that Internet advertising for e-cigarettes present this product by offering the following advantages: (1) health-related benefits; (2) smoking cessation; (3) ability to smoke anywhere; (4) ability to circumvent smoke-free policies; (5) products do not expose others to secondhand smoke; (6) cleaner than tobacco smoking; (7) cheaper than tobacco products and/or nicotine replacement therapies; (8) environmentally friendly; (9) products offer fire-safe alternative to tobacco cigarettes; (10) increased ability to socialize; (11) increased social status; (12) increased romantic involvement; and (13) modern and technologically advanced product.

In 2014, the verb “to vape” was named the Oxford Dictionaries word of the year (“The Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year is ... Vape,” 2014; see Zimmer et al., 2014: 372–373). In their web citation, the Oxford Dictionaries explain that the new predicate derives from the existing words “vapour” or “vaporize.” The Oxford Dictionaries’ definition of the verb “to vape” is “to inhale and exhale the vapour produced by an electronic cigarette or similar device.” The 2014 word of the year was chosen because its usage has increased significantly in the past two years. In the same article, the Oxford Dictionaries make some linguistic observations about the predicate “to vape”:

Vape is also the modifier for other nouns, creating new compound nouns which are growing in popularity. The most common of these are *vape pen* and *vape shop*, and there is also recent evidence for *vape lounge*, *vape fluid*, *vape juice*, and others. Related coinages include *e-juice*, *carto*, and *vaporium* — as well as the retronym *tobacco cigarette* for traditional cigarettes. (A retronym is a new term created from an existing word in order to distinguish the original word from a later development — for example, acoustic guitar developing after the advent of the electric guitar.)

Selected brand names of e-cigarettes

In their essay entitled “Four Hundred and Sixty Brands of E-Cigarettes and Counting: Implications for Product Regulation,” Zhu et al. (2014) point out that the current number of brand names for e-cigarettes is enormous (466+). These authors (Zhu et al., 2014) conclude that:

The number of e-cigarette brands is large and has been increasing. Older brands tend to highlight their advantages over conventional cigarettes while newer brands emphasise consumer choice in multiple flavours and product versatility. These results can serve as a benchmark for future research on the impact of upcoming regulations on product design and advertising messages of e-cigarettes.

In fact, the proliferation of e-cigarette brands corresponds to their increasing popularity. Moreover, the shelf life of many brands is relatively brief for various reasons including lack of dedicated advertising, brand identity factors — all of which may result in reduced sales and popularity.

Danesi (2013: 82) defines brand naming as “[...] a stratagem designed to convey conceptual images associated with products through a suggestive name.” A brand

image, according to Danesi (2009a: 46), “[imbues] a product with an identity or distinct ‘personality’ by giving it an appealing name, designing a distinct logo for it, devising appropriate pricing (for a specific market segment), associating it with a certain lifestyle through advertizing and so on.” It is this representation that evokes cultural meaning for a brand. Danesi (2013: 82–83) further notes that “[a] name turns a product into a symbol [...]. The coinage of an appropriate brand name is thus the first crucial step in embedding a product into social consciousness as something larger than itself [...] Suggestive names are those that symbolically evoke lifestyle and psychological meanings.” Danesi (2002: 103) points out that multiple associations of a brand name constitute a connotative chain. In particular, Danesi (2002: 104) observes that “[t]hese chains constitute the underlying level of the ad’s textuality. The more chains there are, the more suggestive the meanings assigned to the product.” In this sense, a brand name constitutes a code that evokes a sub-cultural motif that product users recognize and want. Table 1 illustrates the connotative chain of referents and their implied meanings with the brand name *Vapor Couture*®.

Two sources (Best Electronic Cigarette Brands for 2014, 2014; Electronic Cigarettes Reviews, 2014) served as the corpus for this note on selected brand names of e-cigarettes with a total of twenty-six brand names.

E-cigarette brand names feature a variety of allusions designed to evoke multiple subliminal messages (Packard, 1957). These references include colors, numbers, life style, and the process of smoking. Moreover, these brand names may employ a single name, or a combination of two morphemes fused into a single brand name in order to evoke various messages. A discussion of connotative meaning(s) of twenty-six e-cigarette brand names follows.

Three of the brands have numbers. One features all Arabic numbers (777®), while the other has the numerical name written out in conventional English orthography (*Fifty-One*®). A third brand name is *Zero*®. The choice a numerical brand names suggests a possible numerological meaning. Thus, the number 777 suggests introspection and creative self-expression (The Numerology Number 777 Essence, 2014). The number 777 also has other referents including the following: (1) Religious (the number 7 is considered a perfect number in Hebrew tradition); God’s number); (2) computing (in UNIX, 777 provides all file access permission); (3) aviation (Boeing’s 777 jet released in June of 1995 remains a popular form of jet travel). *Fifty-One*® has multiple referents, including the title of the fourth episode of the fifth season of

TABLE 1

EXAMPLE OF A CHAIN OF SIGNIFICATION FOR THE E-CIGARETTE BRAND *VAPOR COUTURE*®

Brand Name	Referents	Implied meanings
<i>Vapor Couture</i> ®	Reference to vapor of the exhaled byproduct of inhaling an e-cigarette; Reference to the verb “vape” to refer to the process of using an e-cigarette; use of the French word <i>couture</i> to allude to high fashion.	Product user is savvy and recognizes the references to “vaping” and the fashion statement implied in its use.

the very popular television program *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013), which is the fiftieth episode of the series. Finally, *Zero*® implies an absence. What is missing depends upon the specific user interpretation, e.g., harmful toxins.

Frequent allusions to smoking, vaping, and activities related to e-cigarettes appear in brand names in order to call attention to the product's purpose. The obvious references include the morpheme "cig" in combination with another morpheme. Thus, "cig" (a reduced form of cigarette, Nuessel, 1992: 76–78) is combined with "aqua" (Latin = "water") to produce the brand name *Aquacig*®, which suggests that the exhaled portion is a vapor. A second product employs "cig" plus "vette" (*Cigavette*®), which evokes the sports car *Corvette*® and a lifestyle associated with it. Another group of brand names includes the morpheme "smoke" as a part of its name. Three of these have prefixes, e.g., "e-" (= electric, *Esmoke*®), "eon-" (= long lasting, *Eonsmoke*®), and "ever-" (= long lasting, *Eversmoke*®). The brand name *Smoke Tip*® combines the morphemes "smoke" and "tip" — an evocation of the smoke that emanates from the tip of a traditional cigarette.

Another brand (*South Beach Smoke*™) evokes an exotic place and an associated lifestyle "South Beach" (Miami, FL) and its associated meanings of an upscale and trendy lifestyle. Some brands use color to suggest various associations, e.g., *Green Smoke*® with the frequent association of the color green with growth, rejuvenation, nurturance, and ecological conservation. *Blu*™ is an abbreviation of the color blue, and it is also a child's name frequently given to a girl. The letters in the *Blu*™ represent an acronym for various organizations, concepts, and products, e.g., "Backlight Unit" (LCD), "Bigger, Better, Longer" (*South Park* movie), and "Bomb Live Unit" to name but a few of the meanings (Blu, 2015). The color blue has long been associated with peace and tranquility.

Several brand names derive from the noun vapor, the inhaled and exhaled byproduct of using an e-cigarette. At least four such brands contain an allusion to this noun. The "V" of *V2*® may be an abbreviation of "vapor." "V2" also refers to the V2 rocket employed by the Nazis during World War II. As Danesi (2009b: 31–58) points out, the alphabetic letter "V" has a multiplicity of symbolic referents, including the sign for "victory" (using the third and fourth fingers), and a symbol for "girl power" employed in a video by the all-female British pop group Spice Girls founded in 1994, to name but a few of the allusions for "V." Three other brands include the complete word "vapor" or an apocopated form. *Vapor Couture*™, for example, places it before the French noun "couture" (French = "dressmaking"), which is a reference to the fashion industry frequently used in the fixed phrase "haute couture." *Vapor Fi*™ likewise employs the noun "vapor." The suffix "Fi" is of uncertain origin. Finally, *Vapage*® contains the first part of the word "vapor" followed by the French suffix "-age," which means action or process.

Other brand names allude to various manifestations of illumination. Thus, *Firebrand*®, for example, has multiple meanings including a piece of burning wood, or a person given to provoking unrest and discontent. Thus, this product name can denote product purpose or connote the type of person who uses the product. *Eluma*® consists of two morphemes. The first is the easily recognizable prefix "e-," or the abbreviation of "electronic." The second is "luma" derived from the Latin word for light ("*lumen*"). *Halo*® derives from the Greek "*halos*" and it means disk. This

product designation would refer to an aura of veneration relating to a person or thing. Thus, the use of *Halo*® as a brand name, suggests that the product basks in aura of quality. *Apollo*® refers to the Greek god of light and the sun. In this sense, the brand name evokes classic antiquity although there is another obvious allusion, namely, the US Apollo space program (1960–1972). The film, *Apollo 13*, directed by Ron Howard (1954–), is cinematographic representation of the aborted 1970 lunar mission is a popular cultural reference. *White Cloud*™ has an obvious meteorological meaning with its reference to the *cumulus humilis*, which are wider than they are high. This is an obvious association with the vapor exhaled when a person uses an e-cigarette.

Still other e-cigarette brand names bring to mind additional connotations. *Play*® is a common verb, which suggests that a person who participates in a sport or other recreational activity. This meaning perhaps alludes to the use of an e-cigarette as an amusing pastime. The word also suggests the related noun “player” is a slang term to refer to a male who uses women for sex. *Revolver*® is laden with popular cultural allusions including a six-shooter, a 1966 Beatles album, a UK band, and three distinct films (1973, 1992, 2005). Thus, this brand name evokes multiple referents, which can appeal to multiple domains associated with *machismo* (Spanish, “exaggerated masculinity”). Likewise, *Victory*®, with its initial alphabetic letter of “V,” may suggest the position of the index finger and middle finger when using the e-cigarette. The complete name “victory” may also imply the fact that the use of this specific product will lead to victory over the habituating effects of traditional smoking. *Henley*® is a boy’s given name and it means “high meadow.” It is also a family name. Both forms of the name suggest British heritage with an implication of the upper class. The brand name *Bloog*® is enigmatic. The urban dictionary notes that it is street slang for weed, or *marijuana* (Bloog, 2015).

Concluding remarks

This note reviewed selectively the brand names of e-cigarettes and their implied meanings in the marketing of these products. The naming of e-cigarette brands corresponds to previous studies on energy drinks (Nuessel, 2010) and bath salts (Nuessel, 2014), i.e., brand names are evocative and manufacturers seek to mine a wide variety of cultural meanings through the careful and deliberate process of naming a product. The burgeoning market of e-cigarettes and the corresponding increase in research on these devices and their ancillary products will continue.

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Appendix

Selected list of e-cigarette brands

The following list of selected e-cigarette brands appears in alphabetic order. It derives from two sources (Best Electronic Cigarette Brands for 2014, 2014; Electronic Cigarettes Reviews, 2014).

777®
 Apollo®
 AquaCig®
 Bloog®
 Blu™
 Cigarette®
 Eluma®
 Eonsmoke®
 Esmoke®
 Eversmoke®
 Fifty-One®
 Firebrand®
 Green Smoke®
 Halo®
 Henley®
 Play®
 Revolver®
 Smoke Tip®
 South Beach Smoke™
 V2®
 Vapage®
 Vapor Couture™
 Vapor Fi™
 Victory®
 White Cloud™
 Zero®

Note on contributor

Frank Nuessel is Editor of *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* (2008–). He was elected a member of the *Asociación Norteamericana de Lengua Española* in 2015. He served as President of the Semiotic Society of America (2011), and Chief Reader of AP Italian (2006–2009, 2011–2012). He was President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian (2012–2014).

Correspondence to: Frank Nuessel, Department of Classical and Modern Languages, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292-0001, USA. fnues01@louisville.edu