

Beer Brand Names in the United States

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RECENT POPULAR WORKS on the advertising industry (e.g., *Madison Avenue, U.S.A.*, or *The Hidden Persuaders*) have told how admen create an image for a product by selecting names that evoke customer feelings resulting in purchase, and by otherwise suggesting the desirability of the given product. In these brief lines, it is proposed to examine brand names of beer, a widely sold and widely advertised product, in an effort to discover the chief bases of appeal in marketing this beverage through name selection.

What does one think of when beer is mentioned? Leaving aside that segment of the population for whom this refreshing drink still has overtones of alcoholism and all that Prohibition was meant to correct, one may sketch the popular image of beer as follows. Beer is a German drink, above all – it is associated with the Germans; Germans are good brewers; Germans drink lots of beer; therefore, a beer strongly suggestive of Germany must be a good beer. Beer is light, cool and refreshing on hot days – therefore, a beer name which evokes images of cold, lightness, flavor, etc., must also be a good beer, since these are qualities that beer has.

Any encyclopaedia will inform one that brewing is a very ancient art. Germans, nonetheless, are closely linked in the popular mind with beer, just as wine makes one think of France, and vodka of Russians.

In these notes the results of an investigation of beer brand names will be given. First and foremost, beer is intimately associated with Germans, things German and Germany. About half of all brand names are either unmistakably German (and are even so identified as such by a person knowing no German), or evoke in some way German regions or German brewing craftsmanship. About one quarter of remaining brand names imply that beer is refreshing, mellow, tasty, cold or thirst-quenching. The remaining names are

divided among such categories as local names from states or regions, numbers or letters, or descriptions of the label or an identifying feature of the container. It should, however, be mentioned that not all advertising centers on the brand name as such; some stresses other slogans or features which are made the basis for campaigns.

Data for this brief study have been drawn from my files of over 200 brand names collected since 1960 while resident and traveling on the West Coast and in the Mid-West. These names fairly represent, I believe, the naming practices of the brewing industry. From telephone books and industrial directories only a few names have been obtained, as it was often difficult to distinguish between the names of brands and those of companies, breweries or distributors. Furthermore, some large brewers bottle what appears to be the same product under an assortment of names. As some brands are marketed nationally, and others are unknown outside their home cities, no place of origin is indicated except where pertinent. The inclusion or exclusion of any particular commercial name does not constitute an endorsement or lack of one.

Names of German Families or German Words. Most numerous in the categories here are brand names of beer which are proper names clearly identifiable as German, or which are other German words. The element *-brau* (*-bräu*) "brew" occurs several times. These names include *Augustiner*, *Becker's Mellow*, *Blatz*, *Blitz-Weinhard*, *Braumeister*, *Budweiser*, *Bürgermeister* (always carefully spelled with the unlauded ü), *Coors*, *Durst* (means "thirst"!), *Edelweiss*, *Esslinger*, *Fehr's*, *Fisher* (perhaps from Fischer?), *Gluek* (note spelling), *Goebel*, *Goetz* (pronounced "gets"), *Gunther*, *Hals*, *Hamm's*, *Heileman's Lager*, *Hudepohl's*, *Karl's K*, *Köl* (spelled with ö), *Krueger* (no relation; means "publican, innkeeper"), *Knickerbocker* (has Dutch overtones, to be sure), *Leinenkugel's*, *Meister Bräu*, *Miller's High Life* (perhaps originally Müller?), *Pabst Blue Ribbon*, *Pfeiffer*, *Piels*, *Prager*, *Rheingold*, *Ruppert's*, *Schaefer*, *Schlitz*, *Schmidt*, *Schoenling*, *Steinbrau* (an invented word?), *Stroh's* and *Wiedemann's*. Others are *Berlin*, *Gottelman's*, *Hauenstein*, *Reisch*, *Rheinlander*, *Rhineland*, *Schell*, *Storz*, *Waldeck* and *Walter's*.

German Locale. Among the names of American beers which are based on or refer to Germany or German-speaking regions are *Alps Brau*, *Bavarian's Select*, *Bohemian*, *Dutch Lunch*, *Dutch Treat*,

Hapsburg, Heidelberg, International Old Dutch, Old Dutch, Old German (twice), *National Bohemian, Old Heidelbrau* (note invented word), *Old Vienna* and *Weiss Bavarian*. It should be pointed out that the word "Dutch" is used in many areas of the Mid-West as a synonym for German (stemming from *deutsch*) and does not refer to a Hollander. This is the usage of my native region of eastern Nebraska, heavily populated by Germans from the migrations of 1848.

Quality or other Feature of the Product. Next most numerous after names having a connection with Germany is this classification, in which brand names seek to show that the product is superior, tasty, well-prepared, of good ingredients, fit for a king, well-aged or of ancient origin, and, if none of these, cold. These names include *Best, Brewer's Best, Champagne Velvet, Cold Brau* (note the blend of English *cold* and German *Brau* "brew"), *Excell, Glacier, Golden Grain, Happy Hops, L & M* (Light and Mellow), *Lucky Lager, M B* (Mellow Brew), *Maid-Rite, Old Export, Old English, Old Timer's, Old Tankard* (Pabst), *Regal, Regal Select, Rex* (whether the connection with Latin *rex* "king" is evident would be hard to say), *Royal 58, Sterling, Supreme Pilsner, Velvet Glow, and Western Gold*. Most of these names have some logical connection with beer or its qualities.

Features of the Container. Some brand names make use of the color of the can, or of some object on it, or of the label, in the case of bottles. Among these names are *Black Label, Black and White Label, Gold Label, Red Top, Silver Bar* and *Silver Top*. Closely allied with these names is another group of brands which denote tangible objects or use some identification which is usually on the container. Most of these do not have any logical connection with beer. One is reminded of the names of inns and coffee houses in times before reading was widespread among the people, e.g., "St. George and the Dragon," or "The Golden Arms," and so on. Among these names are the following: *Banker's, Brown Derby* (has a hat), *Crystal Rock, Country Club, Falcon, Fox Deluxe, Highlander* (has Scotch plaid), *Iroquois Ale, Keeley's* (uses a green color, implying Irish), *Old Abbey, Old Gibraltar, Red Cap Ale* (has a head wearing a red cap), *Tudor, Tech, and Twenty Grand*.

The American Scene. A number of brand names make use of what might be called local color, using names meaningful in specific

localities. Here not as many have been included as might be, because the local significance of some names was not recognized by me. Among those in this category are *Buckeye* (Ohio), *Camden Beer* (New Jersey), *Canadian Ace*, *Cincinnati Cream*, *Dixie* (New Orleans), *Duquesne*, *Eastside Old Tap*, *Erin Brew*, *Falls City* (Louisville, Ky.), *Genesee* (upstate New York), *Great Falls Select* (Montana), *Grain Belt*, *Hollywood Ranch Markets* (Los Angeles), *Iron City* (Pittsburg, Pa.), *Olympia* (Washington State), *Padre* (California, implies the old Spanish missions), *Rainier* (Washington State), *Santa Fe Lager*, *Tivoli*, *Valley Forge* and *Wisconsin Premium*. Others are *Butte Lager* (Montana), *Cascade* (mountains in western Washington), *Dakota*, *Grain Belt* (Minnesota), *Old Milwaukee* and *Western*.

Miscellaneous Names. A few brand names are difficult to classify under any rubric, and to be sure, some of those given above might well be included under different headings. A few names do not suggest, at least to me, anything particularly German or "beery." Here I would place *Ballantine*, *Drewry's* (uses picture of Canadian mounted policeman), *Kingsbury*, or *Sheridan*. In this group fall a few names employing numbers, as *102*, or *Oertel's 92* (i.e., 1892), or *Brew '52* (presumably 1852, but possibly 1952), or the simple name *ABC*. Requiring some local knowledge are the names of *Simon Pure* beer (made by the Simon Brewery of Buffalo) or *Jax Beer* (brewed by Jackson Brewery of New Orleans). Finally, one should not neglect *Falstaff*, Shakespeare's jolly drinker and wencher. This category, too, could no doubt be expanded by additional research.

In this survey, drawn from several hundred brand names in my files (which I plan to continue), I think it has been demonstrated that beer is definitely associated with Germany, because German names and references to German regions are the most numerous among brand names. In second place come references to the refreshing qualities of beer, with names of local significance and some oddments bringing up the rear. It would, of course, be possible to undertake a very comprehensive study, with correspondence to these firms which might reveal additional information or corrections, that would no doubt form an interesting chapter in the history of the brewing industry in America, but this work must be left to a later date.