

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



What's in a name?

What attracts you when you buy a car – price, appearance, specifications?

Do you care about the name? So, would you buy a Diablo... or a Pajero?

A recent study by the University of Tasmania has found that car names matter *much less* than the big companies might think.

Kim Lehman, from the UTAS School of Management, has delved into the world of branding and product naming in the auto industry. He says that car companies spend hundreds of thousands on getting the name of their cars just right.

“Manufacturers direct considerable marketing effort towards developing names like Nissan’s ‘Tiida’ or Mitsubishi’s ‘308’. But up until now, there’s been very little data on whether a name *really matters* to the consumer.

In fact, Mr Lehman found a car’s name is usually less important to consumers than the brand – that most people are more interested in ‘Toyota’ than in ‘Hilux’.

“In many cases it was the corporate brand name which was the most important name when buyers make a decision,” Mr Lehman said.

“The evidence we found suggests that many buyers like their car’s name, but it’s not a major part of their buying process. People will often still buy a car when they don’t like the name.”

He also found that buying Australian-made was not as important as buying Australian-named – his survey found city folk liked the sound of ‘European’ names while those from rural areas preferred a name that sounded ‘Australian’.

“People from rural areas and towns believed an Australian car name was important significantly more than people from the cities did. The trend appears to be the lower the population density, the more favourably received an Australian-sounding name will be.”

The survey was mailed by Toyota Australia (who supported the research) to a list of around 10,000 people who had just bought a new passenger car.

“I also found that a car is a very personal thing – more than 40 per cent of people surveyed thought the type of car they drive says something about them as a person.

Mr Lehman’s study also found that letters are out, and numbers are in.

“People found apparently meaningless letter combinations like “GLXi” more confusing than helpful,” said Mr Lehman. But numbers to indicate a series or line were given the thumbs-up.

“The information will provide valuable insight into how buyers feel about the naming of products, which perhaps can then be used by industry to better tailor its products to meet buyer needs,” Mr Lehman said.

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