

2025 Brand Naming Review

**Punches Thrown.
Lessons Learned.
Opportunities Ahead.**

The Year Brand Names Got Loud

If 2024 was the year names went sleek and self-serious, 2025 was the year they got loud again.

Governments rebranded geography. Legacy brands tried to future-proof themselves into oblivion. AI companies dropped new model names faster than anyone could keep up.

Some of it was brilliant.

A lot of it was exhausting.

All of it made naming louder and more visible than ever.

This report is your concise naming post-mortem:

What happened, why it matters, and what to steal (or avoid) in 2026.

Let's go →

- 32** big name launches
- 13** high-profile renames
- 7** major brand blowups
- 1** global naming hangover

⚡ From DeepSeek to the Dept. of War, names got louder and stakes got higher in 2025.

HBO un-Maxed itself, Ford rediscovered its Racing roots, and Cracker Barrel learned what happens when nostalgia fights minimalism.

By year's end, the whole naming & branding world needed a breather.

Crafting Iconic Names for Ambitious Brands

1K+ brands named

\$2.4T+ in client market cap

\$26B+ in brand value created

\$2.2B+ in startup funding raised

Trillions of global impressions

ally

Blackstone

BRAVIA

 **coast**

array

alpaca

 **Ownership
Works**

 **ONE
PASS**

 **natural
bliss**

 **Heineken**

Wii.

JPMORGAN
CHASE & CO.

1. New Names In 2025: Where the Energy Was

1.1 AI & Infrastructure



DeepSeek R1

The “cheap genius” challenger

Chinese startup DeepSeek launched R1, an open-weight reasoning model that outperformed expectations and landed on TIME’s Best Inventions list.



GPT-5

Inevitability is the brand

OpenAI dropped GPT-5. No flair, no tricks. Just the next number. Continuity is the story.



Nano Banana

Lab joke turned mascot

Google’s new image model had a codename so sticky that it went public. In a year of “Ultra Max Pro Omni,” Nano Banana reminded us that humor scales.



Llama 4 Scout / Maverick

The herd expands

Meta doubled down on its now-iconic Llama lineage, layering personality and hierarchy through subnames.



Grok 4 Fast / Heavy (xAI)

Attitude as architecture

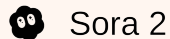
Musk/xAI’s Grok models leaned on transparent trims like Fast and Heavy. Naming clarity as swagger.



QwQ-32B

Brilliance, buried

A stellar model from Alibaba with a name that looks like an emoji error code. Exhibit A in how lab naming and market naming diverge (more on this on page 14).



Sora 2

The poetic sequel

OpenAI kept the sky-bright, creative name “Sora” and added a simple “2” that makes the upgrade feel easy, fun and ready for anyone to start making AI video.



2025 made the divide clear: labs name for GitHub, markets name for people. “QwQ-32B” might impress researchers, but “Sora” inspires users.

1.2 Tech & Mobility

Liquid
Glass

Liquid Glass

UI as physical stuff

Apple's new design language sounds tactile. It's sensual, not technical. You can feel the metaphor.

Fizz

Fizz

Shopping gets social

Instacart launched Fizz, a light, social-first name that signals its shift from pure utility to shared shopping and discovery.

SLATE

Slate

The blank-slate brand

Bezos-backed Slate Auto made “modular” cool again. The name doesn’t shout. It’s a blank slate for whatever you want your truck to be.

ALSO.

Also

The “and also” brand

Rivian’s micro-mobility division nailed understatement: Also says, “We’re Rivian, and we know movement goes way beyond trucks.”

FIREFLY

Firefly

Buzzing with energy

Tiny, luminous, premium! NIO’s Firefly feels exactly like what it is. A masterclass in emotional metaphor for micro mobility.

⚡ The tech and mobility sector kept names restrained but confident, favoring metaphor over machismo. “Slate” and “Also” both whisper where others shout, showing that understatement can be differentiation.

Expect more “quiet power” names like these as the EV and infrastructure races mature.

1.3 CPG, Culture & Design

Stiller's

Stiller's

Eponymous comfort

Ben Stiller's naturally sweetened soda leans into nostalgia and personality. Founder names are back when they feel like a wink.

OLLY
MOOD + SKIN

Olly Mood + Skin

Wellness to glowness

Olly stretched into beauty with Mood + Skin, a clean functional name that links emotional balance to complexion benefits.

Dommmino's

Dommmino's

The name as craving

Domino's triple-M campaign turned sound into flavor. Naming became sonic branding, And they're literally baking *mmm* into every order.

OLO

Olo

The "impossible" color

A scientific discovery turned cultural meme: a teal that doesn't exist, with a name that feels made for nail polish, activewear or mid-century furniture.

NOT
BEAUTY

NOT Beauty

Defiant beauty energy

SZA's new line with a name that negs the category while still playing in it, signaling attitude over aesthetics.

Örabella

Orebella

Mystic supermodel aura

Bella Hadid's scent-forward beauty brand with a soft, mystical name built for luxury storytelling.

SKYLRK

Skylrk

Street minimalism

Justin Bieber's fashion label uses a sleek, vowel-lite coinage built to scale. It even nods to an early-2000s disemvoweling comeback, the trend behind names like Motorola's Razr.

⚡ Across CPG, design, and culture, brands pushed personality to the front. Founder names, bold coinages, and clean functional sub-brands all show the same move: strong masterbrands keeping the story simple and memorable.

2. Renames: What Changed? (Or Changed Back?)

2.1 Enterprise & SaaS

Agentforce

Salesforce ↓

Agentforce 360

The tech giant re-skinned everything under “Agentforce.” Smart in theory (unifying its AI story) but verbose and confusing in practice. “Agent fatigue” is real.

 **cotality**

CoreLogic ↓

Cotality

A clean, futuristic coinage that captures a shift from data supplier to connected ecosystem. Technical yet human enough to travel.

 **SUPERHUMAN**

Grammarly ↓

Superhuman

A bold leap into aspirational (and AI-first) territory. The risk? Losing the clarity that made the original a standout.

iru 

Kandji ↓

Iru

A short, abstract name that signals the move from Apple MDM to a unified AI security platform. And yes, Iru is a little less weird than Kandji.

 **upsun**

Platform.sh ↓

Upsun


A shift from generic to bright and distinctive, built to signal its new AI-forward development platform.

mapex 

Azure Cloud Services ↓

Mapex AI

Moving from a generic cloud label to an ownable, AI-driven geospatial intelligence brand built for global scale.

 In enterprise and SaaS, AI changed the stakes. Names have become proof of evolution. Agentforce, Superhuman, Iru... these are all different business plays but they have the same goal: signal transformation and lay a new, stronger foundation.

2.2 Consumer, Corporate & Institutional



Max ↓
HBO Max (again)

After a costly identity experiment, HBO reclaimed its legacy. Proof that simplicity isn't always the same as equity.



MSNBC ↓
MS NOW

MSNBC got spun off and has rebranded to MS NOW, keeping the least important part (MS) while adding a clunky backronym: "My Source for News, Opinion & the World"



Gannett ↓
USA Today Co.

Gannett rebranded around USA Today. The name people actually know. Sometimes the sub-brand is the brand.



Ford Performance ↓
Ford Racing

A textbook rename back to roots: more direct, more emotional, more fan-language.



Boy Scouts of America ↓
Scouting America

Gendered names continue to fade. This one kept heritage while widening the tent.



U.S. Department of War

Department of Defense ↓
Department of War

A secondary title, yet a literal name change as political signal. Naming as propaganda, not just labeling.



Gulf of Mexico ↓
Gulf of America

A map-level rebrand that triggered international pushback. Proof that geography naming is geopolitics now.



Outside tech, roots reigned. Whether full reversions or subtle riffs, brands found power in the past.

3. Controversies: When Brands Go To War

3. Brand Controversies



Cracker Barrel

The eight-day disaster

The brand removed its “Old Timer” logo and “Old Country Store” tagline. Internet fury followed. Eight days later, it was back.

JAGUAR

Jaguar’s Implosion

Heritage hit & run

The leaping cat disappeared; minimalism replaced it. Enthusiasts cried betrayal. The brand stood its ground, but alienated loyalists.



Salesforce Rename

Fatigue

Even loyal admins revolted: “We just learned the last naming scheme.” Too much change in feature names kills familiarity & usability.

PrettyLittleThing

PrettyLittleThing

Black-and-white backlash

The pink, playful identity turned chic and monochrome. And a lot of folks thought it lost its heart. Perhaps this was a case study in confusing sophistication for progress?

As ever

As Ever, Complicated

Meghan Markle scrapped American Riviera Orchard for feeling like “word salad,” but the new name sparked a series of potential trademark issues with similarly named fashion labels.

AMERICAN EAGLE

Sidney Sweeney x American Eagle

Remember “Sidney Sweeney Has Great Jeans”? Not a naming fail, but a language one. The jeans/genes pun sparked backlash, proving how fragile wordplay can be in 2025.



Political Naming as Culture War

“Department of War” and “Gulf of America” proved that language can weaponize overnight. Brands should take note: names now live in meme speed.

⚡ Across categories, even small changes drew big fire. Simplify too fast and it reads as erasure. Change too boldly and it sparks revolt. The lesson is the same every time: expect blowback and be ready to navigate it before, during & after launch.

4. AI: How To Name It, How To Use It

4. AI + Naming

AI was the invisible infrastructure behind almost every brand story this year. From the **Stanford AI Index (2025)** to the rise of “agentic platforms,” we saw the same semantic arms race around words like *Agent*, *Force*, *Copilot*, *Brain*, *Mind*.

Everything is an Agent

Everyone wants “agent.” Salesforce took *Agentforce*. Google launched the *Agent Development Kit*. Microsoft had “Copilot” and others took it, too. Those words will soon be as diluted as “cloud.”

Two Ways to Name

- **Lab names** → internal, technical, opaque (*QwQ-32B*, *Grok 4 Heavy*).
- **Market names** → human, emotional, meme-ready (*Sora*, *Nano Banana*).

The Opportunity

With “AI” now bolted onto everything, differentiation shifts from the tech to the product story. Clarity and uniqueness matter more than ever.

As the volume of models, features and platforms keeps spiking, teams need naming systems built for scale.

Our advice: keep calm even when the acronyms get loud.

How We See Using AI to Help (& Hurt) Naming ↓

- [Leveraging AI for Naming: When It Makes Sense \(and When It Doesn't\)](#)
- [How to Use AI to Spark Naming Ideas Without Falling Into the Generic Trap](#)

5. Awesome vs. Awful Names in 2025

5. Awesome vs. Awful

Awesome (or at least very smart names)

- **Slate Auto** — metaphor and function align perfectly
- **Liquid Glass** — tangible language for digital design
- **Nano Banana** — absurd yet human; unforgettable
- **Firefly / Also** — warmth in a cold tech category
- **Stiller's Soda** — founder personality done right
- **Dommmينو's** — sound as appetite + a fun marketing play

Common Thread

Each creates a *metaphor or mood*, not just a label.

Awful (or at least problematic names)

- **QwQ-32B** — unreadable outside the lab
- **Agentforce 360** — coherent strategy, clunky execution
- **Gulf of America / Department of War** — clarity weaponized
- **Cracker Barrel, PrettyLittleThing, Jaguar** — nostalgia ignored

Common Failure

Tone, timing, audience misread & lack of prep

6. Macro Trends + Predictions

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Names as Weapons

In 2025, governments used names to project dominance. Corporations learned how fast rebrands can turn political.

🧠 Expect naming risk to be treated like geopolitical risk.

AI Naming Saturation

With everyone fighting over the same 10 words, expect new metaphor clusters & novel approaches.

🧠 Thinking outside the current AI box will be the only way to find legal viability & brand differentiation

Renaming Fatigue

The market has had enough. Expect fewer top-level renames and deeper internal rollouts.

🧠 Choose if (and how) to rename wisely. Train employees first, prep like crazy, and remain steadfast if there's blowback.

Human-esque Names Return

In a world of QwQs and Agents, the warm names, like Stiller's, Also & Sora, win hearts.

🧠 Expect more eponymous, soft, and slightly whimsical names across serious categories.

The "Back to Serious" Correction

After years of cheeky fintechns and ironic DTCs, sober names are back. *Silverfort* security beats *Daffy* giving.

🧠 Gravitas will sell again.

⚡ Taken together, 2025's chaos signals a recalibration. The pendulum is swinging back toward meaningful restraint. Names that feel grounded, human, and substantial. Shock will lose its value. Cultural & contextual fluency will be the new flex.

7. Tanj Did What In 2025?

7. Tanj Did What?

2025 wasn't only chaos.

We did some cool stuff!

We helped launch names like [Dashlane Omnix](#), [Goodstack](#), [Few & Far](#), [Sidara](#), [Onomi](#), [Actual](#), and [Ovation](#).

We kept shaping the conversation around naming through media coverage in [Fast Company](#), [Brander's Magazine](#), [Big Names in Naming](#), and [The Branderman Podcast](#).

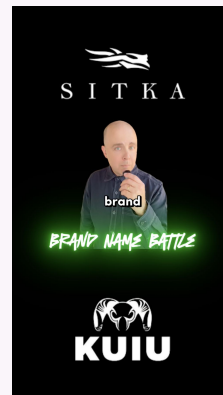
And we dropped over **250 videos** across social 🗨️

All about educating, entertaining, and defending the craft of naming.

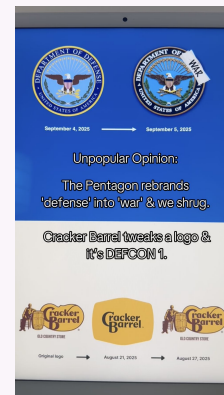
See highlights here



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46k views / 1k likes



Y1 Recap w/ Stats

8. Where To?

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Who knows what will happen in 2026.

But now that you have this report, you can use it as:

- **Evidence** – to push back on chaotic renaming and empty AI buzzwords.
- **Inspiration** – to show teams how metaphors, nuance, and systems cut through.
- **Warning** – that in 2026, the cost of naming mistakes (political, cultural, economic) *will* climb higher.

Either way, the world isn't getting simpler.

And *naming will continue to get harder, guaranteed.*

If you need help, [talk to us](#) 🗣️

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