Original Article

The magic of 'great' linked to product names

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ABSTRACT 'Great' is an adjective that is differently employed by organizations for naming products, as a kind of magical word that adds value to products. However, little is known about this supposed effect. This research analyses the power of 'great' when linked to product names under different settings. The aim of this research was to determine whether the word 'great' and some of its synonyms, such as 'grand', are magical words that add value to a product. A series of empirical studies were carried out, employing both random and convenience samples, and using face-to-face interviews, web and telephone surveys. Results show that when consumers know that 'great' means truly superior, they overestimate some of the main attributes of 'great' products. In this sense, 'great' serves as a powerful tool to increase expectations about a specific product. There is also weak evidence that, for new or unknown products, 'great' provides small added value. However, when there is no way to know if 'great' truly means superior but the evaluated product is well-known, consumers generally react with indifference. Finally, if 'great' is artificially added to the name of a product, there is no effect on consumer perceptions with respect to the product. This research clarifies the conditions where 'great' has a positive impact on the bottom line for some companies. Consequently, it is a term that marketers should consider when seeking to persuade consumers.

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INTRODUCTION

A new circus comes to the city! There are numerous posters located on walls and numerous radio commercials advertising the upcoming event. This is a common scene in hundreds of cities around the world, but do people perceive the circus differently dependent on the inclusion of the word 'great'? As there are many circuses from diverse countries that deliberately include the term 'great' in their names, one wonders if consumers react differently, for example,

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to 'The American Circus' versus 'The Great American Circus'? Real examples as The Great American Royal Circus, The Great Australian Bite-sized Circus, Great British Circus, Great Bombay Circus, Great Royal Circus, Great American Circus, Great Circus Alaska and so on, make us think the owners of those companies believe that the word 'great' influence people's perceptions about the products they are providing. But do really 'great' is a kind of magical word when linked to brand/product names?

To answer this question we have to first focus on consumers and their knowing about the meaning of 'great' for that specific product or brand. For example, in the case of new circuses coming to the city, consumers do not know *a priori* whether the addition of the word 'great' indicates a genuine difference, as they must form their own expectations about circuses from the information they receive from the various external channels with which they interact. Accordingly, the world 'great' may influence their expectations. When there is no prior experience with the product labeled as 'great', there is no need to update expectations about the product (for example, opinions from peers). Thus, the consumer's expectations are partially created based on the consumer's understanding of the word 'great'.

Nevertheless, there are situations where consumers know that a product linked with the word 'great' has undoubtedly one or more superior attributes relative to a similar product that is not linked with this word. A clear example is derived from the wine industry. A synonym of 'great', 'grand' is employed to label wines (Grand Reserve) of higher quality than Reserve wines. Every consumer knows that a Grand Reserve wine of the Rioja region is better than a Reserve wine from the same region. However, the vast majority of consumers do not know exactly what the distinguishing differences are in the production process of these two types of wines. More importantly, most consumers would not be able to properly evaluate whether the price difference between the Grand Reserve and Reserve distinctions is justified. For Spanish wines, a Reserve wine means that the wine was aged for at least 3 years, at least one of which must have been in the cask. Wines that have been aged for 5 years (two in the cask, three in the bottle) or more are labeled as Grand Reserve wines. Thus the question, do consumers think that 'grand' means, specifically, an additional 2 years of aging? Conversely, does 'grand' increase (decrease) consumers' perception of the aging of wines? If so, producers of wines would obtain a clear advantage (disadvantage) by creating Grand Reserve wines rather than creating Reserve wines.

A similar use of grand is achieved by some food companies to name products. For example, in 2014, McDonald's launched a special version of the Big Mac called Grand Big Mac. This hamburger was available only during the FIFA World Cup. Certainly, consumers would know that the calorie content of the special hamburger was higher than the classic Big Mac (745 compared with 510 – www.mcdonaldsmenu.info-), but the vast majority of people probably did not worry about this before going to a McDonald's. In countries such as Spain, McDonald's is not obligated to provide caloric information for its products in its restaurants. Thus, consumers were likely unaware of the exact calorie count of the Grand Big Mac, knowing only that it was larger and cost more than the classic Big Mac (€4.35 compared with €3.65).

Consequently, the use of 'great' and similar words, such as 'grand', has been identified in two general scenarios, as presented in Table 1, depending on whether consumers know that 'great' effectively means a change in the product. For example, consumers know that Grand Reserve

Table 1: Examples of the use of 'great' in marketing, and studies achieved in this article

	Consumers know that 'great' means superior	*Consumers do not know if 'great' means superior*
Linked to the brand name or product portfolio	Wines, Hamburgers	Circuses, Monuments
Studies	(1a) Category of a product: *Grand Reserve Wines*	(2a & 2b) Brand name: *The Great Circus Ulysses*
	(1b) Name of a product: *Grand Big Mac*	(3a) Personal brand: *The Great Wyoming*
	–	(3b, 4) Monument names: *The Great Wall of China, The 'Great' Eiffel Tower*

wines are better than Reserve wines and that a Grand Big Mac has more calories and a higher price than a Big Mac. Nevertheless, consumers do not know if 'The Great Royal Circus' would be better than 'The Royal Circus' or if 'The Great Wall of China' would be longer than 'The Wall of China' because these comparisons are not possible.

The aim of this research was to determine whether the word 'great' linked to a product name and some of its synonyms, such as 'grand', are magical words that add value to a product. To achieve this aim, I have developed a series of empirical studies across the two identified scenarios. These studies covers a broad range of forms of employing 'great' depending on its use as: naming a product category (for example, Grand Reserve wines); naming one of the products of the portfolio of a brand (for example, Grand Big Mac); naming a brand (for example, The Great Circus Ulysses); naming a personal brand (for example, The Great Wyoming); naming tourist product, such as a place or a monument (for example, The Great Wall of China). Table 1 summarizes the studies within the two general scenarios.

Under my knowledge, this is the first attempt in the marketing literature to approach analyzing this concept. The remainder of the article is as follows: First of all, I review the scarce literature about the meaning of great for consumers, and I develop some research questions and hypotheses. After that, I explain the series of empirical studies achieved, which have been designed to respond to the formulated research questions and hypotheses. Specifically, I address the following issues: (i) how consumers quantify the meaning of 'great'; (ii) the use of 'great' within a brand name in the context of new products or information scarceness; (iii) the use of 'great' for well-known brands; and (iv) the employment of 'great' as a forced marketing resource. Finally, I discuss results and limitations and I provide suggestions for further research.

THE MAGIC OF GREAT

As 'great' is employed to name some products and brands, we could think that is a kind of magical word that influences people's perceptions about such products and brands. The reasoning is straightforward: a 'great' product/brand has something better/larger/higher/and so on, than a product/brand without the word 'great' linked to its name. If 'great' has some kind of magical properties, the perceived value added to the product/brand would be higher than the mere difference in quality/size/length/and so on.

From a semantic perspective, 'great' can mean large in size, important, outstanding, intense, profound, excellent and so on

(see Oxford Dictionary). All of these adjectives have generally positive connotations when they are linked to products. When creating a brand name, some authors, such as Robertson (1989), recommend that the meaning of a brand name must be congruent with the values and concepts that the brand wants to communicate. Therefore, brand names are the first way that brands transmit their desired positioning. If a brand is positioned as superior, important, excellent and so on, then including 'great' in its name may be a successful strategy.

Furthermore, these adjectives are fuzzy and relative by nature. Although they do not denote an exact numeric quantity, they do require comparison to something (a referent object) to establish their relative meaning. Therefore, there is intrinsic uncertainty regarding what the word 'great' really means. However, when the referent object is known and its attributes are quantifiable, individuals understand that the 'great' product outperforms the referent object in some quantifiable way. Nevertheless, the fuzziness of the 'great' product does not necessarily disappear because consumers do not always deal with perfect information and they continuously employ heuristics in their daily decisions (Mousavi and Gigerenzer, 2014). For example, in the specific context of food products, as Aydinoglu and Krishna (2011) explain, multiple studies have demonstrated that consumers have difficulty estimating food volume through visual inspection. Furthermore, verbal information about stimuli is also difficult to use when estimating size, even when the object is close to the actual size.

Accordingly, we have no criteria to determine whether consumers really think that certain attributes of the 'great' product are beyond or below a quantifiable point. The examples of Grand Reserve wines versus Reserve wines and the Grand Big Mac versus the Big Mac illustrate this point.

However, we know that consumers establish anchors, that is, reference points that are numeric, and serve as a basis to determine the relative gain of the other options considered (Thomas and Morwitz, 2009; Sitzia and Zizzo, 2012; Yan and Duclos, 2013). If we provide such reference points to consumers about products without 'great' with the aim that all consumers have the same numeric reference point, then we could analyze whether consumers overestimate or underestimate key attributes of the 'great' products when a known anchor is provided. Therefore, the first research question is concerned with the quantification of the meaning of 'great'.

RQ1 How do consumers quantify the meaning of 'great' when this adjective is linked to a product name and there is a known reference point to establish the comparison?

As explained by John *et al* (2006), individuals establish the meaning of concepts by constructing a map of associations between the central concept (the central node of a network) and other spontaneous concepts, ideas and associations that come to mind when that central node is activated. For example, if 'great' is the central node (A) of a network of associations including outstanding (B) and excellent (C), and circus (D) is a also the central node of another network of associations including entertainment (E) and emotion (F), then linking 'great' with circus, that is, A with D means that both networks of associations also are connected. Therefore, circus, entertainment and emotion would also be linked to attributes such as outstanding and excellent. Obviously, the construction of each individual map by each consumer is a complex process in which experience and knowledge about the product and brand partially determine the final concept map. Unconscious thoughts are also an important determinant of each map constructed (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008).

 1350-231X **Journal of Brand Management** Vol. 23, 2, 179–196

Therefore, with respect to new products or when information about a product is scarce, the possible magical effect of the word 'great' is more likely to appear. This fact occurs because when consumers do not have enough experience and knowledge about a product, they employ proxies for inferring its value or quality (Zeithaml, 1988). These proxies are fundamentally price and image. And both, price and image, interact forming the associative map of each individual with respect to that product (John *et al*, 2006). The meaning of the concept 'great' for each consumer is then essential to form the image of the product, and ultimately the final associative map.

Gilovich *et al* (2002) explain the heuristic of representativeness as the reflexive tendency to evaluate the similarity of objects and events on prominent dimensions, and to organize those objects and events on the basis of an outstanding dimension that represents the others (whether true or not). When a consumer hears or reads 'great' then he/she can infer that not only the product is superior with respect to other product without 'great' regarding a specific dimension or attribute, but with regard to other dimensions and attributes.

Consequently, expectations about certain attributes of the product may be enhanced by including the word 'great' in the brand name. Furthermore, the word 'great' has a clear emotional connotation as well in that it can increase arousal, if the individual's expectations about the estimated gains yielded by consuming the product increase. However, as Aydinoglu and Krishna (2011) explained, consumers' natural skepticism with respect to marketer's intentions could cause the hypothesized effect to disappear. Nevertheless, in the context of new products and information scarcity, the possible power of 'great' interacts with the possible power of 'new', resulting in a combination that could overcome the skepticism of consumers. Consequently, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 1: The word 'great' as part of a brand name will add value to the product in the context of new products and information scarcity with respect to those products.

However, consumers are continuously adjusting their expectations about products (Oliver, 1980; Johnson and Fornell, 1991; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993). To the extent that experience, expertise and information grow, the mental map of associations constructed around a product or brand is continuously changing. Therefore, for a well-known product, the possible magical effect of 'great' would be expected to disappear.

Marketers know that people tend to minimize cognitive effort in their daily lives (Douget, 2004). This is the main reason individuals abbreviate names when communicating with others. Long names are commonly shortened following many creative criteria. Thus, it is no surprise that in informal conversations, some persons say, 'The Wall of China' rather than 'The Great Wall of China' or 'The Canyon of Colorado' rather than 'The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River'.

Therefore, as expectations about a 'great' product are updated, as the 'new' effect is no longer relevant, and as the name is often shortened by excluding the word 'great', it would be expected that, under these circumstances, the magical effect of 'great' would disappear. Expectations about the product are now much more adjusted (Oliver, 1980). This does not mean that the word 'great' did not have influence in the past but that including or excluding the word when referring to a brand name in the present no longer influences consumers as they have adjusted their expectations.

Hypothesis 2: For well-known brands, consumers do not react differently in the presence or absence of the 'great' stimulus.

Because of the meaning of 'great', this word often is used to enhance the attractiveness of a product. In such cases, as the brand name of these products is devoid of the word 'great', the word is artificially added, sometimes as a forced resource to persuade consumers. For example, the Eiffel Tower is an architectural icon. Thus, people worldwide are familiar with or have heard of this structure. Nonetheless, there are people who refer to this edifice as 'The Great Eiffel Tower'. In fact, a single search on Google yielded more than 280 000 such results.

Recall that 'subverting' and 'forcing' are well-known tools in advertising for gaining attention (Heath, 2012). As Kover (1995) indicates, subverting means presenting something that is disconcerting or charming, something unexpected enough that it slips past the guard of indifference. Forcing means jolting the viewer into paying some initial attention so that the viewer does not hear the unexpected. Therefore, from the consumer viewpoint, 'great' is unexpectedly heard or viewed linked to a product name and can rise their attention.

Tourist providers, for example, often attempt to persuade potential consumers by artificially adding the word 'great' to well-known monuments or places. In addition to the Eiffel Tower, universally known constructions such as the Statue of Liberty and Big Ben have been subjected to this practice. Again, expectations are crucial when hypothesizing the response of consumers to the intent to persuade them. When a name is well-known and has been heard numerous times by consumers always in the same manner, mental maps about those products are difficult to change by artificially adding 'great' to the name. Moreover, consumers may distrust the intentions of those who deliberately alter a well-known name. In addition, as Heath (2012) explains, consumers have mechanisms to protect against psychological techniques as forcing or subverting. Again, attention can be raised, but the final perception about the product is not expected to vary among individuals. Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 3: For names originally lacking the word 'great', the artificial and forced addition of this adjective as a persuasive resource does not yield any effect on individuals' perceptions of the salient attributes of the product.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

A series of empirical studies was conducted to shed light on the research question and on the hypotheses. Face-to-face interviews, two questionnaires via the Internet and several telephonic interviews were employed as methods to collect data. All interviews via telephone were conducted by a company that specializes in marketing research (www.tmsystem.es). This company randomly selected the individuals from the populations of interest and achieved random assignation to the control and experimental groups as necessary.

The distributions of studies with regard the research questions and hypotheses is as follows: RQ1 was analyzed with Studies 1a and 1b; Hypothesis 1 was analyzed with Studies 2a and 2b; Hypothesis 2 was analyzed with Studies 3a and 3b; Hypothesis 3 was analyzed with Study 4.

Quantification of the meaning of great (Studies 1a and 1b)

Study 1a: How consumers quantify the meaning of 'great': The case of wines

Overview and method The aim of the first study was to analyze the power of using

'great' or a synonym (grand) in the case that consumers effectively know that grand means superior, even though they are unable to exactly quantify such a difference. Wines served as the main objects of this study; a random sample of 298 individuals was selected from a large city in Spain. Participants were interviewed via telephone. They had to respond to the following open question: 'Reserve wines have a minimum aging period of 3 years. However, Grand Reserve wines have a longer aging period. How many aging years do you thing that, at least, a Grand Reserve wine must have?' In addition, participants had to acknowledge if they were wine connoisseurs or not (only 7.3 per cent were wine connoisseurs), together with their age (mean = 52.8) and sex (33 per cent men).

Results and discussion As the distribution of responses of the question of interest was clearly non-normal after applying the Shapiro–Wilks test ($W = 0.77$; $P < 0.001$), I followed Wilcox's (2010) approach to robust methods in order to achieve data analysis. The median of the responses was 6 years, with a normal confidence interval of (5.89, 6.10) after bootstrapping standard errors. This means that participants thought that Grand Reserve wines had a median minimum aging period of 6 years against the 5 years that, at least, they must have.

A more intuitive interpretation of the effect using the mean instead of the median may be obtained after the normalization of that variable. By applying the ladder of powers transformation provided by Stata 12.0, the inverse transformation was chosen. This yielded a normal response variable with mean = 0.163 and 95 per cent confidence interval (0.157, 0.169). As the true minimum aging period was 5 years, the inverse was 0.2. Clearly, the obtained 95 per cent confidence interval did not contain such number.

Table 2: Regression coefficients for Study 1a

	Robust	*P-value*	*Box–Cox*	*P-value*
Wine connoiseurs (No/Yes)	−0.18	0.70	−0.01	0.60
Age	0.01	0.50	0.00	0.40
Sex	−0.22	0.38	−0.01	0.18

In order to analyze the role of expertise, I ran two regression models with the aging period inferred as the dependent variable, and expertise, age and sex as the independent variables: (i) a robust regression, which gives less weight to extreme observations by applying a WLS estimation; (ii) an OLS regression after transforming the dependent variable using the Box–Cox method to approach normality and reducing heterocedasticity (Hardin and Hilbe, 2012). Both regression yielded similar results; consumer expertise did not influence the aging period inferred by participants (Table 2).

These results indicate that, on average, participants significantly overestimated the aging period of the Grand Reserve wines, and this effect was even patent for persons who were familiar with this type of products.

Study 1b: How consumers quantify the meaning of 'great': The case of hamburgers

Overview and method The aim was to determine whether consumers overestimated some of the key features of a product when the label 'grand' was linked to the name of the product. In this case, the case of McDonalds' new product, the Grand Big Mac, was the chosen object of the study.

I randomly assigned a convenience sample of adult people to two groups. For the experimental group, 199 participants responded to an online questionnaire where

Table 3: Regression coefficients for Study 1b

	Number of calories				*Price perceived*			
	Robust	*P-value*	*Box–Cox*	*P-value*	*Robust*	*P-value*	*Box–Cox*	*P-value*
Treatment (control vs experimental group)	65.9	0.000	0.14	0.000	0.40	0.000	0.045	0.000
Experience in McDonald's (from two to four visits per year)	−12.4	0.54	−0.014	0.73	−0.03	0.68	−0.003	0.73
Experience in McDonald's (more than five visits per year)	−20.2	0.35	−0.015	0.72	−0.25	0.005	−0.023	0.02
Concern about calories in their daily food intake	−1.03	0.73	−0.002	0.73	−0.04	0.001	−0.004	0.001
Age	−1.84	0.013	−0.001	0.25	−0.005	0.081	−0.0004	0.16
Sex	−21.3	0.21	−0.045	0.19	−0.12	0.093	−0.015	0.04

a picture of two hamburgers was provided. This picture was retrieved from the advertizing that McDonalds put forth during the limited time that the product, the Grand Big Mac, was available. Participants were asked to determine the number of calories and the price of the Grand Big Mac. The number of calories and the price of the Big Mac were provided as a reference (510 calories and €3.65). Participants were also asked to report their concerns about calories in their daily food intake, and the number of visits per year to McDonald's: *(i) none or one time per year; (ii) two to four times per year; (iii) five or more times per year*. The aim was to control for consumer experience. Finally, age and gender were also indicated. Consequently, and as a difference with respect to Study 1a, the use of the work 'great' as a stimulus was accompanied by a visual representation of the product compared with the reference product of the lower category.

In order to isolate the possible effect of 'great' from its interaction with a visual stimuli (the size of the new hamburger), another questionnaire was sent to the control group. This time I did not write that the new Big Mac was called Grand Big Mac. Again a picture of both hamburgers was provided, but without providing the real name of the new product. Therefore, the word 'Grand' was not present in this second questionnaire.

Results and discussion Again the distribution of responses of the variables of interest (number of calories and price inferred) was clearly non-normal after applying the Shapiro–Wilks test ($W = 0.95$; $P < 0.001$; $W = 0.94$; $P < 0.001$, respectively).

As in the case of Study 1a, I ran several regression models with calories and price inferred as the dependent variables, and the variables: treatment (control versus experimental), experience (dichotomized), caloric concern, age and sex, as the independent variables. The aim was to analyze the effect of including 'Grand' in the experimental sample compared with the control sample. Results of the four estimations are depicted in Table 3.

Results clearly shows that both number of calories and price inferred significantly increased in the experimental condition, that is, when the new product was labeled as 'Grand', once controlled for the remaining independent variables

The subsequent step was to analyze if the number of calories and price inferred were above or below the real value of both variables. I followed the same procedure achieved in the Study 1a. As the distributions of variables were clearly non-normal,

Table 4: Calories and price inferred for both experimental and control groups

	Experimental group		*Control group*	
	Calories (v1)[a,b]	*Price (v2)*[a,b]	*Calories (v3)*[a,b]	*Price (v4)*[a,b]
Median	750 (750; 800)	5 (4.75; 5)	700 (700; 750)	4.5 (4.5;4.65)
Mean	773.7 (754.7; 793.6)	4.83 (4.76; 4.92)	725.8 (700.8; 751.4)	4.49 (4.38; 4.61)

[a]The true value of calories and price was 745 kcal and €4.35, respectively
[b]The normalization of the four variables was achieved after applying the following transformations: (i) 1/v1; (ii) 1/(v2^2); (iii) v3^0.5; (4) 1/(v4^0.5). After computing their means and confidence intervals, the four variables were re-scaled again obtaining the values showed in Table 4.

I computed their medians and their 95 per cent confidence intervals employing the percentile bootstrapping procedure. In addition, in order to obtain a more intuitive interpretation I normalized all these variables by applying the ladder of powers transformation provided by Stata 12.0, and I computed the 95 per cent normal confidence interval. All results are showed in Table 4 after re-scaling the mean for illustrative purposes.

As the true calories of a Grand Big Mac were 745 kcal and the price €4.35, it seems clear that participants of the experimental group overestimated the value of both variables. Although it is also noteworthy to highlight that participants of the control group also overestimated the price, the median and the mean of the responses of the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group. Consequently, there is enough evidence to say that: (i) the word 'Grand' made participants to overestimate the value of two important attributes of the product: calories and price; (ii) these values were also significantly higher than those obtained when the word 'Grand' was not present.

To summarize, Study 1a and Study 1b clearly shows that when 'Great' (or 'Grand') is linked to the name of products and consumers really know this means superior, then people overestimate the numeric values of some key attributes of the products.

'Great' within a brand name in the context of new products or information scarceness (Studies 2a and 2b)

Study 2a

Overview and method The aim of third study was to determine whether the addition of the word 'great' to a brand name increased the perception of the quality of the product. In this case, consumers did not know if the product was better than a product whose name did not include the adjective 'great'. Consequently, there is uncertainty as to whether the word 'great' equates to superior. As many circuses incorporate the word 'great' in their names, they were a logical and attractive entity to analyze.

One hundred students from the business administration department were randomly divided into two groups and were asked to complete a short questionnaire. They were paid €4 to participate in the study. The first group responded to a questionnaire that began as follows: 'The Circus Ulysses is coming to the city next month. This circus has several wild animals, including lions, elephants, and crocodiles, as well as special shows for children. Imagine that you are going to take a small child to the circus. (1) What will be the price of the ticket for a small child? (2) How many lions do you think will appear? (3) When was the last time you went to a circus?' For the second group, the questionnaire was

Table 5: Regression coefficients for Study 2a

	Price perceived				*Number of lions inferred*			
	Robust	*P-value*	*Box–Cox*	*P-value*	*Robust*	*P-value*	*Box–Cox*	*P-value*
Circus vs Great Circus	0.82	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.47	0.07	0.34	0.04
Experience	−0.03	0.60	−0.01	0.54	0.02	0.50	0.01	0.57
Age	−0.07	0.60	−0.00	0.99	0.12	0.06	0.07	0.09
Sex	−0.37	0.48	−0.16	0.22	0.06	0.82	0.04	0.82

identical, but the name of the circus was changed to 'The Great Circus Ulysses' (Ulysses was an invented name for a fictitious circus). The first two questions were proxies for evaluating the perceived quality of the circus through price and through the number of lions inferred. The third question served to control for the experience of the participants. The questionnaire concluded with two questions regarding the age and sex of the respondents. In the end, 99 valid questionnaires were obtained from a sample comprised of 48 per cent women. The mean age was 19.6 years.

Results and discussion Again the distribution of responses of the two questions evaluating the quality of the circus were non-normal ($W = 0.92$; $P < 0.001$;0.76; $P < 0.001$, respectively). These two variables were the dependent variables for the analysis. Although a randomized design was employed, the low sample size of both groups invited to consider other control variables to build a model relating the experimental condition with the dependent variables. Again robust regression and Box–Cox regression were run.

As Table 5 shows, there is some statistical evidence of the 'great' effect for one of the indicators of quality: the number of lions inferred. Regarding price perceived, results were non-significant. At this point, and considering the confusing results regarding the 'great' effect, another experiment was achieved.

Study 2b

Overview and method Table 5 shows weak evidence regarding the 'great' effect. However, considering that sample size was small, a lack of power could mask a significant effect. Therefore, another experiment was designed, this time with a larger sample size that included 302 citizens of an important Spanish city who were randomly selected, divided in two groups, and then telephonically interviewed. The interviewer asked the following question of the first group of participants: *The Circus Ulysses is coming to the city next month. It has a capacity of 1000 people, and tickets will be available at a single price of 6 Euros for children and adults This circus has several wild animals, including lions, elephants, and crocodiles, as well as special shows for children. How many people do you think will attend the first show?* Respondents had to choose between two options: (i) fewer than 500 persons or (ii) more than 500 persons. The same question was asked of the second group, but name of the event was changed from 'The Circus Ulysses' to 'The Great Circus Ulysses'. If the 'great' effect exists, then participants should conclude that 'The Great Circus Ulysses' would attract more people than 'The Circus Ulysses'; thus, the number

Table 6: Participant responses of the Study 2b

	First sample (n = 302)		*Replication sample (n = 151)*		*Total sample*	
	Circus	*Great circus*	*Circus*	*Great circus*	*Circus*	*Great circus*
Less than 500 persons	80	67	41	34	121	101
More than 500 persons	72	83	34	42	106	125
Pearson χ^2	1.92; $P = 0.17$		1.49; $P = 0.22$		3.36; $P = 0.067$	

Table 7: Logistic regression coefficients for Study 2b

		P-value
Circus vs Great Circus	0.35	0.06
Age	−0.01	0.06
Sex	−0.16	0.44

of respondents selecting 'more than 500 persons' should be higher for the second group compared with the first group.

Results and discussion Results are showed in Table 6. Effectively, participants chose 'more than 500 persons' more times for the 'great' condition than for the control condition, but this difference was not statistically significant ($P = 0.17$). As in the Study 2a, results indicated a trend in the direction of the expected effect but there was no statistical evidence to support it. A replication sample of 151 individuals was also collected from the same population, but again the same trend indicated by results was not statistically significant ($P = 0.22$). However, both samples together approached to the significance at the 5 per cent level ($P = 0.067$). As age and sex were also collected as control variables, a logistic regression was also implemented for the total sample of 453 participants. Results showed in Table 7 indicate that the probability of choosing 'more than 500 persons' increases with the 'great' condition, but with a *P*-value of 0.06.

Results from Study 2a and Study 2b must be taken with caution. While it is true that there is no strong statistical evidence of the expected effect, it is also unquestioned that all results, without exception, show a trend toward the expected effect, which could indicate a small effect size, that is, an effect size that would be only detectable in large samples.

'Great' in the context of well-known products and brands (Studies 3a and 3b)

The third stage of this research comprised a series of studies to advance the understanding of the effect of the term 'great' by analyzing how consumers react to well-known names when the word 'great' is deliberately included or excluded from such names. The aim was to determine if there was a priming effect caused by the addition of the word 'great' that changes the mind structure and affects consumer perception of the product. In the cases cited herein, the consumers were familiar with the products – a personal name and a monument name.

Study 3a: Personal names

Overview and method The Great Wyoming is one of the most outstanding showmen of Spain. He is a 59-year old television presenter, actor, musician and humorist. Since 2006, he has hosted a successful television program on one of the Spanish television channels (La Sexta). The program is characterized by its acerbic and intelligent humor, as well as its political criticism. He has been a well-known Spanish artist since the 1980s when he

Table 8: Participant responses of Study 3a

Intelligence	*First sample (n = 200)*		*Replication sample 1 (n = 201)*		*Replication sample 2 (n = 199)*	
	Wyoming	*Great Wyoming*	*Wyoming*	*Great Wyoming*	*Wyoming*	*Great Wyoming*
Less than the mean	23	7	10	9	9	12
In the mean	34	33	29	35	40	27
More than the mean	43	60	61	57	51	60
Pearson χ^2	11.35; $P = 0.003$		0.75; $P = 0.69$		3.67; $P = 0.16$	

Table 9: Multinomial regression coefficients for Study 3a

Less than the mean (base outcome)	*Sample 1+Sample 2 +Sample 3 (n = 600)*	
In the mean	*Coefficient*	*P-value*
Wyoming vs Great Wyoming	0.19	0.71
Sympathy per the showman	3.31	0.00
Age	−0.00	0.33
Sex	−0.43	0.37
Location	0.10	0.24
More than the mean		
Wyoming vs Great Wyoming	0.39	0.52
Sympathy per the showman	4.67	0.00
Age	−0.01	0.21
Sex	0.28	0.25
Location	0.14	0.03

changed his name (Jose M. Monzón) to the artistic name, 'The Great Wyoming'. He is often called only 'Wyoming'.

The main feature of The Great Wyoming as a TV product is his keen and intelligent discourse, which is considered a differentiating attribute. Accordingly, if 'great' has magical marketing properties, then people would react differently when hearing 'The Great Wyoming' than when hearing only 'Wyoming'.

A total of 200 adults randomly sampled were interviewed at the gate of a shopping center of a big city in Spain. Participants were asked about the intelligence of this showman, and they had to choose between three options (less than the mean; in the mean; more than the mean). As The Great Wyoming has a progressist politic profile, then I included a question about if participant felt sympathy toward him. Finally, questions regarding sex and age completed the questionnaire.

Results and discussion Results are showed in Table 8. The distribution of responses indicates that there was a significant effect of 'great'. Participants said that the showman was more intelligent depending weather the researcher referred to the showman as 'The Great Wyoming' against 'Wyoming' ($P = 0.003$). However these results could not be replicated in both subsequent studies, achieved in other two big cities of Spain. This time, the specialized telemarketing company randomly selected 201 and 199 individuals from two disparate cities, and they telephonically interviewed them using the same questionnaire employed for the first sample. All these participants were also randomly assigned to each group ('The Great Wyoming' versus 'Wyoming'). As Table 6 shows, the distribution of responses yielded non-significant effects for both replication samples ($P = 0.69$; $P = 16$, respectively).

A multinominal logistic regression including sympathy per the showman, age and sex was also achieved (see Table 9), in order to achieve a more complete analysis. As the three samples were randomly collected from three disparate cities, then location also had to be included in the model, and residuals were consequently adjusted by this clustering variable. Considering the category

Table 10: Participant responses of Study 3b

Extension of the monument	First sample ($n=400$)		Extension of the monument	Replication sample ($n=200$)	
	Wall of China	Great wall of China		Wall of China	Great wall of China
4800 kms	46	43	8800 kms	24	24
6800 kms	80	98	10 800 kms	39	41
8800 kms	74	59	12 800 kms	37	35
Pearson χ^2	3.61; $P=0.16$		Pearson χ^2	0.11; $P=0.95$	

'Less intelligent than the mean' as the base outcome, the probability of responding 'In the mean' or 'More than the mean' did not significantly increased if respondents heard 'The Great Wyoming' versus if they heard 'Wyoming' ($P=0.71$; $P=0.52$).

Study 3b: Monument names

Overview and method Places such as the Grand Canyon of Colorado in the United States and the Great Wall of China are giant formations whose names and grandiosity are well-known worldwide, as they are universal tourist products. It is not unusual that these adjective are integrated into their respective names. Thus, the focus of this study was not on the personal name, but rather on the name of the monument, such as the Great Wall of China. The advantage of choosing this creation rather than a personal name is that this monument is known worldwide, and there are no personal characteristics of the product that could influence participants' attitudes toward it.

I designed again a very simple study, where the focus was to respond to the question about the length of The Great Wall of China. As this was a difficult question to answer exactly, then I provided three options: 4800 kms, 6800 kms and 8800 kms. The latter option was the correct one, following the new discoveries of 2009. It is true that, recently, researchers have discovered that the true length of the wall overcame 21 000 kms, but this news came just after the study was achieved. Anyway the true length of the wall was really not of interest for this study, but the hypothesized effect that 'great' could exert on the responses of the experimental group with respect to the responses of the control group.

Again the specialized telemarketing company was employed to randomly select the participants, who were, in addition, randomly assigned to the control and experimental group. Four hundred adult individuals were telephonically interviewed, with mean of age of 51 and 36 per cent were men.

Results and discussion Results are showed in Table 10, and the hypothesized effect was non-significant ($P=0.16$). After that, a replication sample of 200 individuals was also collected from the same population. Now the response options were changed in order to avoid that any possible anchor bias could mask the 'great' effect. Now the options were 8800 kms, 10 800 kms and 12 800 kms. Nevertheless, results of the replication sample confirmed the findings obtained from the first sample; there was a non-significant effect of 'great' ($P=0.95$).

Consequently, Study 3a and Study 3b showed similar results: When great is linked to the brand name in a product (for example, personal brand name or a name of a place), but consumer do not have a clear criterion to compare that product with other similar product lacking of that 'greatness', then 'great' does not yield any effect on the consumer perception about that product. Therefore, 'great' is not *per se* a word that changes the mental map of a product when this node is explicitly and

Table 11: Participant responses of Study 4

Height of the monument	*First sample (n = 400)*		*Height of the monument*	*Replication sample (n = 200)*	
	Eiffel tower	*Great Eiffel tower*		*Eiffel tower*	*Great Eiffel tower*
100 m	42	25	300 m	43	38
200 m	77	80	400 m	29	31
300 m	81	95	500 m	28	31
Pearson χ^2	5.48; $P = 0.06$		Pearson χ^2	0.53; $P = 0.77$	

consciously activated. A possible explanation of the lack of this effect is that people were very familiar with those types of products and they know them indistinctively as 'Wyoming' or 'The Great Wyoming', and 'The Wall of China' or 'The Great Wall or China'.

Great as a forced resource (Study 4)

Overview and method The final study analyzed the case of employing the word 'great' as a forced resource to enhance the attractiveness of a product. In this case, the brand name of that product lacks the word 'great', but this word is sometimes artificially added as a forced resource to persuade consumers. The Eiffel Tower and the forced 'the great Eiffel Tower' were selected for that purpose.

The aim of this final study was to analyze whether this forced usage is effective or, conversely, unnecessary. A random sample of adult Spaniards from a large capital city was selected and telephonically interviewed. Four hundred participants were randomly assigned to the control and to the experimental group. Similar to the procedures in Study 3b, participants in the control group were asked about the height of the Eiffel Tower. For the experimental group, the name was changed to 'the great Eiffel Tower'. The same three options were offered as responses – 100 m, 200 m and 300 m. The latter response was the correct one.

Results and discussion The distribution of the responses showed in Table 11 indicated a possible small significant effect ($P = 0.06$). Therefore, it would be plausible to think that that added word effectively influenced consumer perceptions about the grandiosity of the monument. However, this possible tiny effect could not be found in a replication sample of 200 participants subsequently collected from the same population ($P = 0.77$).

Consequently, results from Study 4 did not support the believing that forced addition of the adjective 'great' to a name could help to persuade consumers about the attractive of a product. If we search 'the great Statue of Liberty' in Google we will also obtain more than 280 000 results. Study 4 tells us that this would be an unnecessary adjective; The Statue of Liberty should always be called that way.

CONCLUSIONS

Across a series of studies, this research shows that when consumers know that 'great' means truly superior, they overestimate some of the main attributes of 'great' products. In this sense, 'great' serves as a powerful tool to increase expectations about a specific product. There is also weak evidence that, for new or unknown products, 'great' provides small added value. However, when there is no way to know if 'great' truly means superior but the evaluated product is well-known, consumers generally react with indifference. In these cases, referring to these products as 'great' adds no value to them in the current time. However, we must not discard the idea that referring to them as 'great' did add value to them in the past, when they were new to

  1350-231X **Journal of Brand Management** Vol. 23, 2, 179–196

the market. Finally, if 'great' is artificially added to the name of a product, there is no effect on consumer perceptions with respect to the product. Accordingly, this research has identified conditions when the word 'great' exerts a rather magical effect on consumers. There are numerous implications regarding this effect.

First, consumers overestimate some important attributes of the 'great' product when they truly know that 'great' means a superior product. Given a reference point to achieve the comparison (a key attribute of a product without 'great' linked to its name), consumers believe that the 'great' product has an increased quantity of that attribute than it actually does.

From a theoretical viewpoint this result implies that the semantic meaning of 'great' is associated with some attributes of products that make those products something special. When consumers know that 'great' means superior, this adjective adds value to products because of the overestimation of some key properties or attributes. The reason why this occurs deserves to be investigated in further research. However, one possible explanation to this phenomenon is the associative map of the word 'great' that consumers form from their prior experiences with other contexts and products. That network of concepts forms the meaning of 'great' and, in this case, the meaning overcomes expectations. Cultural specificity could also be explored in future studies, for example, further research should explore the effect of 'great' in cultures that have different penchants for size.

There are also implications for measurement theory, because when an anchor is provided, that is, when the reference point is the same for all participants, then participants provide a very disperse pattern of responses about the quantification of some attributes linked with 'great'. Therefore, verbal labels may interact with numerical responses in measurement scales employing both verbal and numerical options (see Javaras and Ripley, 2007; Saris and Gallhofer, 2007). For example, adding verbal labels to a 1–7 Likert rating scale could bias responses, because such verbal labels could have different numerical meaning to each consumer. Under this perspective, 'great' should be considered a fuzzy concept, as some other verbal labels used in rating scales (see Martínez *et al*, 2010).

From a managerial perspective, this overestimation offers brands an interesting scenario. Brands could raise the prices of the 'great' products, as doing so would not disconfirm consumers' expectations about the price of these products. Alternatively, if costs and brand positioning allow for it, brands could lower the prices of those products and consumers would be happy to purchase them at lower prices than expected. Such a scenario would probably be a good strategy for McDonald's but not for the case of Grand Reserve wines because of the positioning of these types of products. Brands producing Grand Reserve wines would clearly benefit from this overestimation because many consumers would be willing to pay more for this category of wine.

Second, for new products or when the information about specific products is scarce, labeling them as 'great' could be a good strategy to persuade consumers. However, this research has shown weak evidence in this regard. Consequently, while 'great' circuses could benefit from this effect, it seems that the effect is of little relevance. For products that are similar to circuses, that is, services that are itinerants, it would be recommended to employ the word 'great' as a marketing tool to enhance the expectations about the show to attract consumers. For other products, this strategy could perhaps be effective when a product is introduced to the market. After that, however, consumers would adapt their expectations such that any magical effect would

vanish. This fact was empirically demonstrated in the third study, wherein we analyzed a personal brand name and a monument name.

New products are generally attractive because novelty influences arousal. This activation of the autonomic nervous system is a component of the emotional responses of individuals (Juslin and Västfjäll, 2008). Arousal can be associated with a hedonic experience by encountering a novel stimulus (Weierich *et al*, 2010). Hutter and Hoffman (2014) show the importance of designing marketing actions that yield surprise to attract consumers. Experiencing a stimulus for the first time could be an enjoyable experience that decays over time to the extent that the same stimulus is experienced again. This is the reason, as Rozin *et al* (2006) notes, that the first time we hear a song we perceive as beautiful, we experience maximum pleasure, but this level of enjoyment is diminished on later encounters with the song. Therefore, new products, new forms of interacting with consumers, new advertising campaigns and so on, are generally attractive.

In this regard, one of the possible criticism of this study is the apparent infeasibility of isolating the possible effect of 'great' from the possible arousal effect yielded by a new product or by a product where information is scarce. However, it is necessary to stress that this is not true; for participants in the control group of the circus study the product was as new as for participants in the experimental group, so if 'great' would have interacted with the arousal yielded by a new product, participants in the control and experimental groups should have been equally affected.

When the product is known, consumers would adapt their expectations such that any effect of 'great' vanishes. This is consistent with the expectations-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), because consumers are able to adapt their expectations through successive interactions with the product (including impacts derived from advertising, publicity and so on).

Third, forcing the addition of the word 'great' to a well-known name as an artificial resource to persuade consumers is not effective. When the meaning of a product is well-formed in the mind of consumers, trying to alter this meaning with the introduction of a deliberate adjective does not yield any additional benefit.

Actually, the unnatural addition of the word 'great', acts as a forcing and, as Heath (2012) explains, consumers have developed defense mechanism to protect against being exploited by these psychological techniques. One of them is the counter-argument, based on the interpretation of consumers of the brand message into their own words; the more consumer think about the claim and advertisement makes for a brand the easier finds it to contradict that claim. Therefore, when participants heard 'great' in a unnatural way linked to a name of a monument, they probably reacted with indifference because they thought that it was simply a persuasion strategy. The other mechanism that Heath (2012) identifies is perceptual filtering; each of the components of the whole message are processed at a different level of attention. Therefore, other possible explanation of those results is that consumers were so familiar with the name of those monuments that the forced addition of 'great' was not processed at a high level of attention, and then the possible potential effect of 'great' was undermined.

One of the important limitations of this research is that only the employment of the word 'great' linked with brand names was analyzed. Further studies should analyze the effect of the word when it is used as a communication strategy (for example, 'great discounts'). The word 'great' is also used in many ways within the marketing context. For example, the term 'great

discounts' results in more than 1 million hits in a simple Google search. Similarly, 'great prices' results in 32 million responses. Accordingly, it seems that the word 'great' is perceived by many companies to be a magic word that persuades consumers.

In addition, other studies should examine in greater depth how consumers interpret several similar adjectives that are used to label portions of units of products, such as cookies. Words such as maxi, mega, ultra, XXL, extreme, huge, large and so on, are used in the packaging of some products. It would be interesting to analyze which of these words is the most adequate for each specific case, given that the meanings of such words likely differ among consumers. Aydinoglu and Krishna (2011) illustrate how size labels chosen by the vendors may influence consumer purchasing behaviors. Size labels affect size judgments, such that labeling a product as small would lead consumers to perceive the product smaller than if the product is labeled as large, even when the size of the product is the same. However, the reverse does not hold. That is, small items labeled as large are not credible. Further research should explore this issue in the case of products presented using visual stimuli, as the case of hamburgers I have studied. In the experiment, I showed the size of the 'great' hamburger using the authentic advertizing campaign of the brand. But it will be also interesting to analyze the same research question using a smaller 'great' hamburger, that is, much more akin in size to a normal hamburger. Under this scenario, results derived from Aydinoglu and Krishna (2011) could be confronted.

In conclusion, this research provides empirical evidence that the word 'great', in some cases, has a positive impact on the bottom line for some companies. Consequently, it is a term that marketers should consider when seeking to persuade consumers.

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