

# Brand Names for Traditional Products from Vietnam

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Vietnam has many traditional guilds that produce a wide range of unique products full of cultural characteristics. These products could be saleable in both domestic and foreign markets but most of them lack brand names with the result that they couldn't compete against regional rivals on the world market. Moreover, some products, such as Phú Quốc fish sauce, have been registered by foreign companies.

Traditional products could be defined as unique goods from a specific district, such as ceramics from Bát Tràng, hand-printing paintings from Đông Hồ, fish sauce from Phú Quốc, and copperware from Ngũ Xá, that couldn't be found in other districts. The traditional products are made with special skills and have a long history.

Not all traditional products could build a brand name because it could take shape on the market after a period of time in which the producer proves that the goods or services provide customers with a certain added value. In other words, reputation of a brand name is built on the customers' image of the goods or services. And this image is based on specific features of the goods.

Thus, the traditional product is a necessary condition for a brand name. Let's consider the brand name of Coca-Cola as an example. At first, kola leaves and nuts were traditional products that Indians used as a masticatory on their long trips. They would remain one of various traditional products for thousand years of the Indian people until the Coca-



Cola company used them to make a soft drink in 1884, and it became an internationally famous brand name.

As we know, Swiss watches are made manually. When they met keen competition from Japanese mass production of watches, Swiss watch companies relied on their core ability with their superb craftsmanship to produce high-quality and expensive watches for the high-end market segment. And up till now, Swiss watches still maintain their market share all over the world.

If traditional products, however, fail to provide customers with some added value, they will

never become famous brand names. They are only a feature of a guild or district and considered as a souvenir. For example, Đông Hồ paintings are traditional products from the Đông Hồ village but up to now they couldn't provide painters with high profit or customers with an added value. And they stay simply souvenirs.

To make a full list of traditional products and form a panorama of traditional guilds in Vietnam requires an overall survey at national level. I could only name here some traditional products with certain competitive advantages that familiar to both

local and foreign customers.

In the wartime, the Phú Quốc fish sauce couldn't find a foothold in foreign markets. Thai companies have taken this opportunity to provide the world market with the Phú Quốc sauce made in Thailand. At present, there are favorable conditions for Vietnamese fish sauce factories to take back the brand name and win the potential market of some three million overseas Vietnamese.

Vietnamese cuisine could be also turned into a brand name when foreign customers had another viewpoint on Chinese dishes that were considered as harmful because they contained too much fat and sugar. Vietnamese dishes rich in vegetables and spice that are good for customers' health, on the other hand, have raised a lot of interest among researchers from all over the world. Until recently, an American cook named William Geoffrey Deetz has become a success story when he ran a restaurant with Vietnamese dishes, and many Hollywood and MTV stars are among his customers. This shows that traditional dishes could provide customers with "appetite and essential nutrients based on scientific grounds, and particularly, a familial and warm atmosphere during the meal."

In short, many traditional products from Vietnam have sufficient conditions for remarkable brand names. However, this process requires flexible and long-term plans to improve their quality, advertise their uniqueness and help producers become aware of the importance of the brand name. ■

