

*What's
the deal
with athletic wear names?*



Shoes to shirts



Many major **athletic apparel** brands are also major **shoe** brands, usually starting with shoes and expanding to apparel:

Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Hoka, On, ASICS.

Athletic apparel brands expanding to shoes is less common, but it happens:

Lululemon, Under Armour, Puma.

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Different businesses

Making and selling athletic **shoes** requires greater R&D investment, more complex supply chains, and the development of stronger consumer trust.

Apparel, by comparison, has faster iteration, lower product liability, and lets brands tell more fleeting seasonal stories with more emotional branding.

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Different... naming?

So... lots of athletic brands do both shoes and apparel, but those can be two pretty different businesses and markets.

We had to ask...

*Do brands treat shoes and apparel differently in their approach to **naming**?*

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Short Answer: Yes.

The most common pattern is for shoes to be “namier”--- more evocative and suggestive, technical alphanumeric and model numbers, creative architectures that use verbal assets to build whole brand worlds.

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Short Answer: Yes.

Apparel, by contrast, stays **far more descriptive**, without much cross pollination from the brand's shoe nomenclature (i.e. using some of those same “namier” shoe names on lines of apparel).

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SHOE NAMES

APPAREL NAMES

Cloud 6
Cloudsurfer Max
Cloudmonster
Cloudnova
Cloud X 4
Cloudhero
Cloudtilt
Cloudleap

Club Collective Pants
Focus Tech Sweatpants
Train-T Crop Graphic
Club Collective 1/4 Zip
Studio Tights Flared
5" Core Shorts
Performance-T
Performance Tank

Confers unique identity
while building brand
associations.

Describes the item and
its use case.

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SHOE NAMES

Wave Rider 10
Wave Momentum 3
Neo Zen
Wave Exceed
Hyperwarp
Wave Prophecy
Wave Sky 8
Wave Daichi 9

Confers unique identity
while building brand
associations.



APPAREL NAMES

Softball Legging
Running Short Tight
Recover Straight Leg Pant
Lights-Out Full Legging
Pro Polo
Mizuno Performance Tank
Team Parka
Podium Bra

Describes the item and its
use case.

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SHOE NAMES

Nike Ava Rover
Nike Gato
Nike Mind 001
Nike CITY Premium
Nike Free Metcon 6
Nike Air Max 90 G
Nike Alphafly 3
Nike Vaporfly 4

Confers unique identity
while building brand
associations.



APPAREL NAMES

Cuffed Fleece Pants
Graphic Pullover Hoodie
Open-Hem Woven Pants
Woven Windrunner Jacket
Winterized Pants
Loose Denim Skate Pants
Golf Wind Vest
Vintage Sport Top

Describes the item,
sometimes also its use
case.

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If these brands summarized this kind naming architecture, they'd say:

“We use naming to invite more curiosity about the specs and functionality of our shoes, whereas apparel just kind of exists as part of our broader brand image.”

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Why Descriptive Apparel?

Apparel and accessories tend to include lower price-point offerings, which tend to not get much of their own brand identity—descriptive names, often with the parent brand name slapped on.

Technical *fabrics* often have their own special “ingredient brand” (*think Nike’s Dri-FIT*), but brands don’t necessarily need that degree of technical focus on a single t-shirt design.

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Why Descriptive Apparel?

From a brand architecture perspective, this apparel naming convention keeps focus on **leveraging equity from the parent brand** rather than creating any **unique identity** for lower cost goods that might rotate out of a collection more quickly.

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Counter-examples

However, some brands go against this trend, and it can be useful to understand the business and brand strategies that inform these other architectures.

In some cases, like **lululemon**'s nomenclature system, shoe model names have the same feel and usage patterns as *collection* names used in apparel naming.

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SHOE NAMES



APPAREL NAMES

SwayDay Mule
Restfeel
Cityverse
Chargefeel
Split Shift
Beyondfeel
Wildfeel

Suggestive names imply
use case or evoke a
particular vibe.

Adapted State High-Rise Jogger
Softstreme Classic-Fit Jogger
Align High-Rise Pant
Wunder Train High-Rise Tight
Define Jacket
Flow Y Bra Nulu
Hotty Hot High-Rise Lined Short
Scuba Full-Zip Hoodie

Item names include collection
names, which suggest use case
or evoke a particular vibe.

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If lululemon described their naming architecture, they'd say:

“Our shoe naming largely aligns with our apparel naming because we’re not trying to sell super technical shoes. Our shoes complete the outfit you came in the store for—they are part of the whole package.”

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Counter-examples

Lululemon doesn't sell their shoes outside of lululemon stores or their online retail, so their shoes and apparel are always encountered together.

They aren't trying to sell their shoes in other shoe retail environments, and they don't have the same technical aspirations for their shoes as performance brands like Nike, Hoka, or Mizuno.

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Counter-examples

Their naming architecture, therefore, reflects the business and brand strategy.

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Take-home problem

HOKA is an interesting middle-ground between a Mizuno and a lululemon.

They use evocative or suggestive elements in both their shoe and apparel naming, but still use different linguistic patterns for the two categories:

Shoes with evocative proper names and coinages,
apparel with suggestive two-part compound names.

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SHOE NAMES



APPAREL NAMES

Kawana 3
Gaviota 6
Solimar 2
Clifton 10
Arahi SR
Challenger 8
Mach X 3
Stinson One7

Confers unique identity
while building brand
associations.

SkyGlow Half-Zip
Skyflow Jacket
Kaitoro Knit Jacket
Outtrail Shirt Jacket
ColdSnap Fleece Gloves
Airolite Long Sleeve 2.0
Elaro Knit Tight
GlideTech Short Sleeve

Describes the item and
its use case.

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So what exactly is HOKA trying to do here? And why? Are they...

- A. Trying to maintain a more technical feel for apparel to avoid “lifestyle brand” creep?
- B. Differentiate the brand experience of buying from a shoe retailer versus buying at HOKA?
- C. Help apparel act as a compliment to the shoe business while keeping it in a separate lane?
- D. Little bit of all of the above...



What's the deal?



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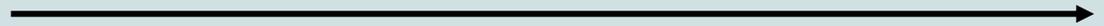


Naming Systems

The Naming Group is *the* naming systems agency.

We've helped some of the world's biggest brands transform their identity and their business through better naming - not just creative words, but powerful systems, architectures, processes, and frameworks that chart a clear path to growth.

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with your business's
naming systems?*

We'd love to help.



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