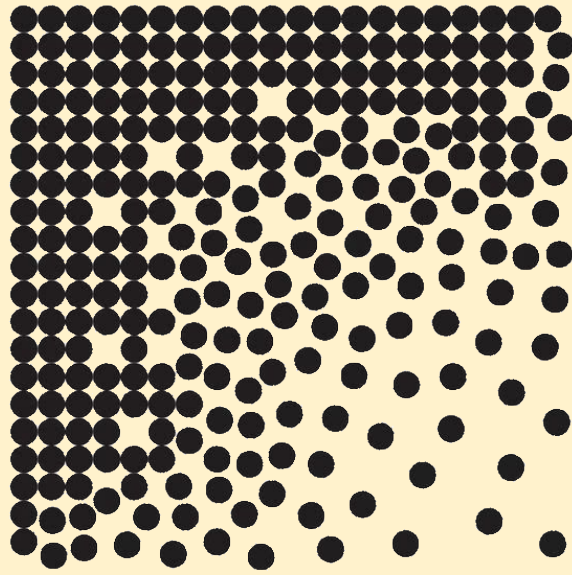


*What's
the deal
with skincare names?*



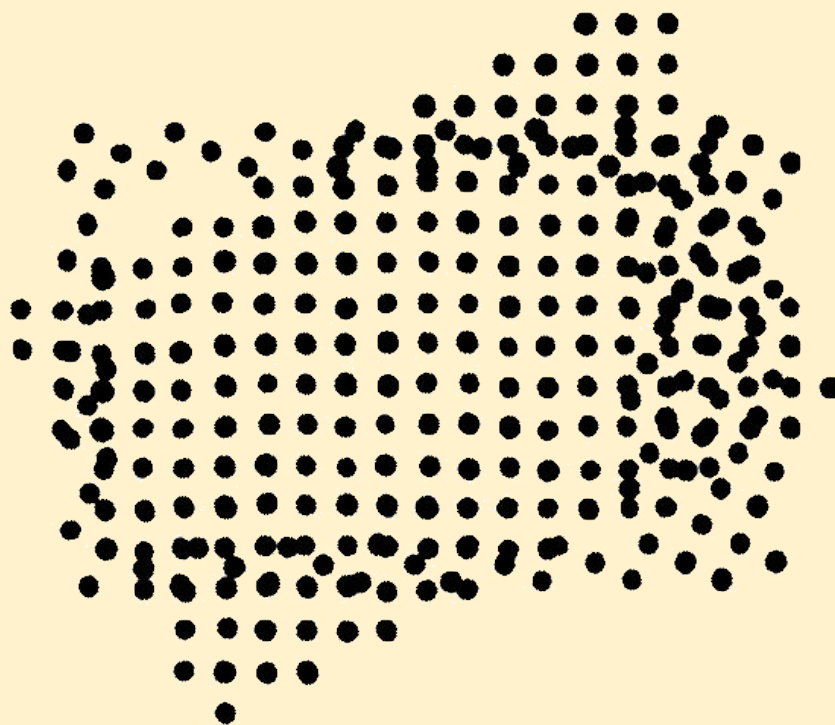


Mom, where do categories come from?

Brands position themselves within various product/service categories—whether that’s “Quick Service Restaurants”, “Digital Asset Infrastructure”, or “Cosmetics”.

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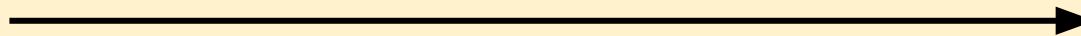


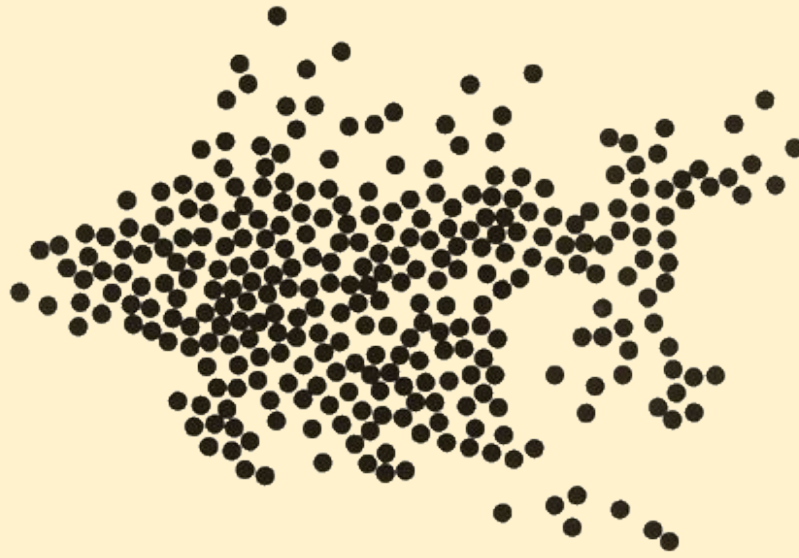
Mom, where do categories come from?

Categories are always a little fluid and fuzzy
(e.g. 'is a hot dog a sandwich').

They are built, shaped, and maintained in consumers'
minds largely through **language patterns**.

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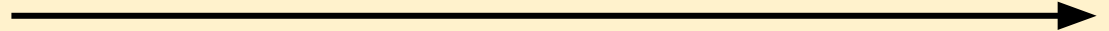




Mom, where do categories come from?

And language patterns, like categories, are always changing.

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It ain't like it was



As namers, one product category we often find ourselves fielding questions about is *beauty*—and how **product names feel different now.**

Circa 2005: Moisturizing Lotion, Anti-Aging Cream, SPF 30 Sunscreen

Today: Cloud Dew, Glass Skin Serum, Barrier Butter

Folks can't quite put their finger on it, but something feels different.

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CLINIQUE

1990's Clinique

rhode

2020's Rhode Skin

**Dramatically Different
Moisturizing Lotion**

Turnaround Cream

Almost Lipstick

High Impact Mascara

**Stay-Matte Sheer
Pressed Powder**

Peptide Lip Tint

Glazing Milk

Pocket Blush

Barrier Butter

Peptide Glazing Fluid

Barrier Restore Cream

Do these names *feel* different? From different eras?

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It ain't like it was



Today's product names in the beauty industry tend to feel a bit more...

Sensorial.

Tactile.

Guttural, even.

They evoke images and feelings where older product names just felt... like, ya know, makeup.

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It's pretty clear when you compare
similar products 1-to-1...

1990's

2020's

**Dramatically Different
Moisturizing Lotion**
(Clinique)



Peptide Glazing Fluid
(Rhode)

Natural Wear Blush
(Maybelline)



**Watermelon Glow Niacinamide
Dewy Flush Brightening Serum Blush**
(glow recipe)

Super Lustrous Lipstick
(Revlon)



Glaze Craze Polypeptide Lip Serum
(LANEIGE)

Double Wear Pressed Powder
(Estée Lauder)



Yummy Skin Blurring Balm Powder
(Danessa Myricks Beauty)

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But why?

Lots of reasons, really.

True difference: *It might actually be inaccurate to say that “Tinted lip serum” is “basically lipstick”.*

Broader culture: *Media saturation has produced more noise to cut through, novelty (picking different language) does that.*

Generational turnover: *Names or terms that are standard today were once new and fresh. Likewise, today’s new is tomorrow’s cliché.*

the **NAMING** *group*



But why?

But for now, we're gonna focus on the primary cause, something that we can see happening across all industries all the time:

Category collapse.



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Generational Category Shifts

For most of the 20th century, **skincare** products (previously known as *toilet goods*...) were a secondary accessory to **cosmetics**—beauty preparations like vanishing cream supported *color products* like lipstick, mascara, foundation.

In the 1980's anti-aging products started making skincare more serious science, which became more important when 1990's trends went more minimal—less color product meant skincare became more visible.

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Generational Category Shifts

The 2000s sent the pendulum back towards cosmetics, but now more entangled with the ideal of HD-ready flawless skin that skincare science had made more feasible.

The two categories became increasingly hard to distinguish. BB Creams, which had existed since the 1960s, took off in the mid 2010's, functioning simultaneously as a **foundation** and a **skin treatment**—sitting firmly both in the cosmetic and skincare categories at the same time.

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Generational Category Shifts

The pandemic was a change accelerator for basically everything, and that cosmetics/skincare difference that was getting blurrier has now all but collapsed—what would have previously been called just “*blush*” is now “*tinted cheek serum*”.

Maybe that seems crazy if you were an active cosmetics and skincare consumer in the 20th century—when those were still two distinct product categories. But an increasing share of the market for beauty products is a generation or two removed from a time when that was really true.

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**20-year-olds don't recognize
20-year category shifts.**

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Category Collapse

When cosmetics and skincare were totally different categories, they were defined by different word clouds.

Blush, bronzer, concealer, foundation, rouge, lipstick.

Serum, essence, exfoliant, retinol, moisturizer.

**If you've only ever washed your face with Irish Spring, the top one is cosmetics, bottom is skincare.

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Category Collapse

But today, many many products are designed to serve both cosmetic and skincare functions.

A **tinted moisturizer** and a **sheer foundation** might be nearly indistinguishable in use and often in formulation, but tinted moisturizer leads with the **skincare** word (*moisturizer* with color added) and sheer foundation leads with the **cosmetic** word (*foundation* that happens to be light).

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It ain't like it was



That fluidity explains why it's a “tinted cheek serum” and not a “blush”... mommmmm 🙄

But it actually also explains some of these seemingly chaotic product names like **Glazing Milk** or **Yummy Skin Blurring Balm Powder**...

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It ain't like it was



You could probably use some more conventional descriptive nouns for these products.

Glazing Milk would have been a conditioning lotion in 1995.

Blurring Balm Powder could easily be a finishing powder with some extra adjectives.

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It ain't like it was



But because of category collapse, the boundaries of the old staple cosmetic and skincare terms have gotten murky.

It makes sense, at some point, to abandon the old vocabulary—words for what a product *is*—and focus on new ways to express a customer's experience of your product.

Hence, a name like **Glazing Milk**, that you can see, feel, and taste.

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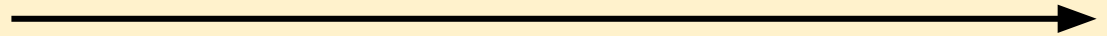


Lessons for Brands

Words change meaning over time.

If you're not a technical B2B seller, don't spin your wheels over whether a descriptive name is 100% accurate.

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Lessons for Brands

Naming strategy needs a longer horizon.

If you want to use language to position yourself in a shifting category landscape, you need to think in decades. Not the average brand strategist window of a few years.

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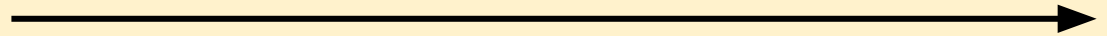


Lessons for Brands

Categories have layers of meaning.

It was easier to add “color” or “tint” meanings to skincare terms like *serum*, than to add “clinical skin health” meanings to cosmetic terms like *blush* or *lipstick*. You have to unpack overlapping layers of implied meaning to understand how categories are structured.

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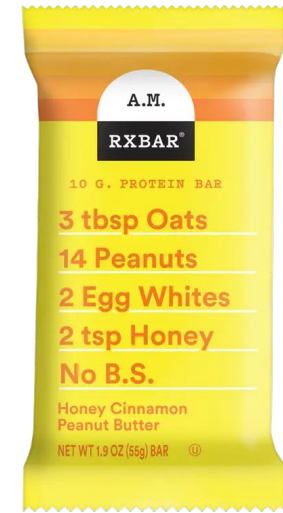


Where else could this happen?

So, we have to ask: what **other industries** are staring down the barrel of a cosmetics/skincare-style collapse, and how can **new naming approaches** give brands in those industries a **competitive advantage**?

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Functional Foods

The FDA distinction between “food”, “dietary supplement” and “drug” is very similar to the cosmetics/skincare division.

Supplements already use the language of drugs, and food is increasingly being spoken of in the language of performance, as though it were a supplement.

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Cleaning Products to Personal Care



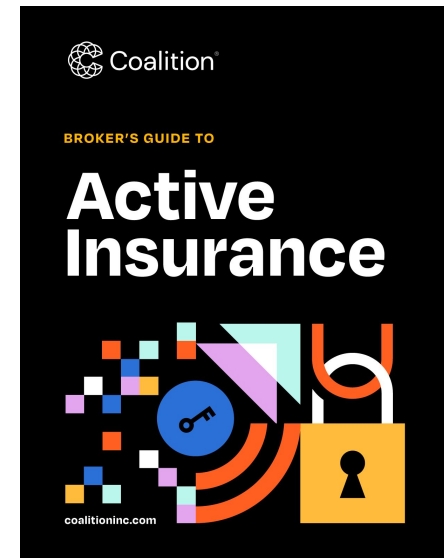
Some brands like Blueland, Branch Basics, and Method have already made attempts at bridging conceptual gaps between home cleaning products and personal care items in the soap aisle.

We could easily see that extend to treating anything that touches or interacts with your body—laundry detergents, floor cleaners, air filters—as something more conceptually like a body soap, with new language to accompany that shift.

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Cyber Security & Insurance



This scenario is just as common in B2B as B2C—maybe even more so. For example, where cybersecurity services have historically been distinct from cyber insurance providers, they are increasingly converging.

Cyber security firms use terms like “resilience” to blend security services with financial insurance products, creating new categories at the juncture of previously distinct ones.

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So yea, that's the deal.



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Category Creation

The Naming Group knows how language shapes categories.

We've helped some of the world's biggest brands and most ambitious startups shape and define new categories by giving them just the right words to explain and position their offering.

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*So, what's the deal
with your brand's category?*

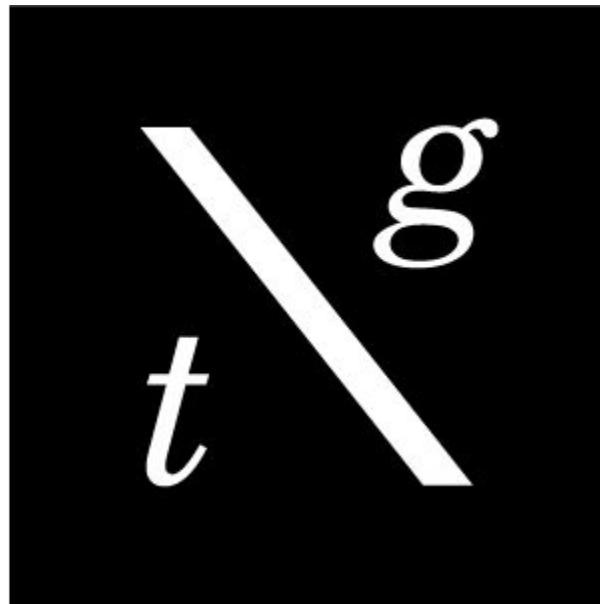
We'd love to help.



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THE REAL BUSINESS OF NAMING