

CARD GAMES

For branding reasons or simply to make an impression, namecards are getting more creative

The Sunday Times, 07 October 2007 – First impressions count. And namecards are a fast, snappy way of making people remember you or your company.

Namecards here, especially those belonging to creative industry professionals, are getting fancier. No boring back-and-white namecards stating just contact details, thank you. Media practitioners, tourism professionals, artists and designers prefer to leave their mark with cards which are stamped with their personalities.

And what a colourful array it is – from cards cut in odd shapes to laminated ones to those embellished with stick-ons or stories to those printed on unconventional materials like cardboard, wood or plastic.

Mr Little Ong, designer director of design agency fFurious, says: “Image matters a lot. The first impression that any business contact has of you is your namecard.”

The design of his namecards from 2004 so wowed creative folk from around the world that it was included in *The Best of Business Card Design*, a 2006 namecard design catalogue.

He describes the bright pink and orange card as tongue-in-cheek “insurance agent card”, replete with his own mugshot and his Chinese name in bubble font. Each card cost him 30 cents to print, a third more than the cost of a normal namecard.

Namecards have their roots in the 15th century in China and 17th century in Europe when craftsmen and businessmen handed out tradecards along with the products they peddled as a form of advertising.

The exchanging of cards among businessmen became a widespread practice with the rise of industrialism in the late 19th century.

Mr Josh Goh, corporate services manager of HR consultancy The GMP Group, says that the primary function of namecards is to mark an introduction. But the function has now expanded to include branding and conveying a corporate identity.

Sometimes, that corporate identity channels a sense of fun.

Ms Agnes Shew, assistant director of Singapore Ducktours, a land and sea adventure tour company, has small, round namecards emblazoned with a grinning duck wearing goggles.

She explains: "While we continue to be 'Uniquely Singapore' in all our products, we also try to be unique and special in the designs of our namecards."

Another company with funky namecards is film and video production house Spinn. Employees fan out seven identical cards in a riot of colours and invite contacts to pick one.

Spinn's marketing executive Vanessa Yeo, 24, says: "It's a great icebreaker when we're networking... Some people wonder if it's a personality test. I've noticed men instantly go for black, or red while women go for purple or yellow."

Five printers Lifestyle spoke to also, note that namecards have become more elaborate in recent years, whether in design or colour choice. Mrs Janet Yap from three-year-old printing firm Print 22 says: "The younger generation demands more now."

She says that a print run of 300 standard cards costs \$35 and prices start climbing once clients demand special moulds or die-cuts, with each additional feature adding another \$30 to \$70 to the bill.

Ms Kittie Tai, shareholder of 41-year-old printing firm Double Six Press, adds: “It all depends on clients’ demands... cards are getting nicer and nicer and the clients usually know what they want.”

But Ms Jonas Ang, senior human resources director of Kelly Services (Asia Pacific), cautions that “a namecard must still serve its primary purpose of providing the necessary information on the person’s name, company and contact details.”

Mr Kenny Leck, a co-owner of BooksActually, whose card features a whimsical story listing his favourite authors and childhood activities, says: “As booksellers, we sell literature, so we decided to incorporate our contact information into a short story.

“But when my parents look at my namecard, they complain that the font is too small”

About SPINN

SPINN is a leading creative video production company which specializes in producing videos for sales, marketing and corporate needs. SPINN consistently delivers high quality work with service excellence, making it the preferred creative provider amongst leading companies and organizations seeking to communicate their marketing and corporate messages in an effective and compelling manner. SPINN's creative videos help brand companies, close sales, launch events, raise funds and recruit talent.

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