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The Consumer
Healthcare Association

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, represents the manufacturers of branded OTC medicines, self-care medical devices and food supplements in the UK.



How naming and umbrella branding of over-the-counter products enables self-selection and self-care for consumers



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Data Collection

The findings in this report are based on analysis from The Self-Care Census 2025, PAGB Reclassification Survey, PAGB Umbrella Branding and Naming Survey, and additional testimonies from our members.

PAGB conducts an annual self-care survey to provide insights into the trends across the general population in self-treatable conditions, consumers' attitudes towards self-care and access to health services. The 2025 version of our Self-Care Census was conducted with 4,003 members of public. The survey was commissioned by PAGB and carried out by Perspectus Global.

In the summer and autumn of 2025, we also carried out two member surveys: one focused on reclassification efforts, and the other exploring the role of naming and umbrella branding in various aspects of OTC business development.



How naming and umbrella branding of over-the-counter products enables self-selection and self-care for consumers



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Executive Summary

This report explores how naming and umbrella branding help consumers identify and self-select over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, build confidence in self-care by leveraging the trust and reliability associated with established brands, and drive innovation and growth – particularly through product launches and the reclassification of medicines to OTC.

As part of the report, we have drawn on insights from **PAGB's 2025 Self-Care Census**, which was conducted with over 4,000 UK consumers, as well as survey responses from PAGB member companies. Our findings highlight how branding influences consumer confidence, product selection, and safe usage of OTC medicines.

The aim of providing this data is to enable and quantify the positive impact of branding on self-care products and to establish this as a relevant data point for regulators when assessing benefit/risk analysis.



77% of respondents stated they would sometimes or always buy branded products to treat themselves



93% of those that choose branded products use the brand name to help find and pick the right products when browsing the shelf

Naming and branding enables identification and self-selection

According to our Self-Care Census, umbrella branding, where a single brand name is used across multiple products, helps consumers navigate the OTC landscape by offering familiarity and trust. This is supported by data which shows that of the 77% of people who purchase branded products, 93% use the brand name to help them find and pick the right products when browsing the shelf³. Clear product naming also supports self-selection by enabling consumers to differentiate between products and choose the most appropriate option for their needs. Brands act as signposts to help consumers navigate by placing products in context and supporting differentiation and self-selection.



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Using trusted brands helps consumer confidence in self-care

Our data shows that brands, which are common in everyday life across the world, are seen as experts in their field by providing familiarity, reliability, and trust in a product. Familiarity with an OTC brand helps to build confidence that an individual is selecting a suitable product to treat their symptoms, as well as simplifying choice, which is especially important when someone is unwell.

Branded OTC medicines help educate consumers about self-treatable conditions and empower them to take control of their health. The brand is not just the product, but the assets associated with them, such as branded websites. In many cases, branded OTC websites are seen as trusted sources of information, playing a crucial role in an online environment, where misinformation is common, by providing consumers with credible, reliable content. OTC companies also bring specialist expertise in consumer behaviour and how best to communicate with consumers, having long engaged with the public through advertising and educational programmes tailored to consumer needs and preferences.

In [PAGB's Self-Care Census 2024](#), 73% of people said that they trust health information from an OTC brand website. In this context, brands play an educational role by offering easy-to-understand information that empowers individuals to self-care⁷.

Reasons for choosing branded products: trust, reliability, and effectiveness

In our 2025 Self-Care Census, consumers cited several reasons for choosing branded OTCs, with trust and confidence in effectiveness emerging as the top factors.

Trust and credibility, which are often built through long-standing market presence and consistent product experience, accounted for over 60% of relevant consumer responses as to why they chose branded OTCs. Other notable drivers for



61% of respondents agreed that trust in a brand influenced their decision to purchase their OTC products

their purchasing decisions included recommendations from healthcare professionals or family members, past positive experiences, and overall brand reputation. All of these drivers collectively contribute to a brand's familiarity, trust, and reputation with the public. Continuous positive experiences reinforce a brand's reputation for reliability and credibility, which can take years to establish. These insights provide a clear foundation for understanding consumer motivations.

While there is a strong overall preference for branded OTCs, further analysis revealed that there is some variation in preferences across different demographic groups. For instance, men are slightly more likely than women to purchase branded products and place greater importance on brand recognition. Younger adults are also more likely to favour branded OTCs compared to older adults, particularly those over 65. Black and Black British consumers are also more likely to trust and prefer branded OTCs. These insights highlight opportunities for industry to further build awareness and trust in branded OTCs across all communities.

How naming and umbrella branding supports innovation and growth

Beyond its influence on consumer behaviour, naming and umbrella branding play a critical role in driving growth and fostering innovation within the OTC sector. Members tell us that developing and launching a new brand demands substantial time and resources, making the ability to introduce products under an established, trusted brand key to commercial success. As the Government advances its growth agenda, national policymakers must ensure OTC manufacturers have an enabling regulatory environment which promotes innovation and market expansion while maintaining an appropriate balance of risk.



How naming and umbrella branding of over-the-counter products enables self-selection and self-care for consumers

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Background

Naming, umbrella branding and over-the-counter medicines

According to findings from our 2025 Self-Care Census, more than **9 in 10 people in the UK say they feel confident using OTC medicines to manage their symptoms for self-treatable conditions**³. OTC medicines play a vital role for millions of people



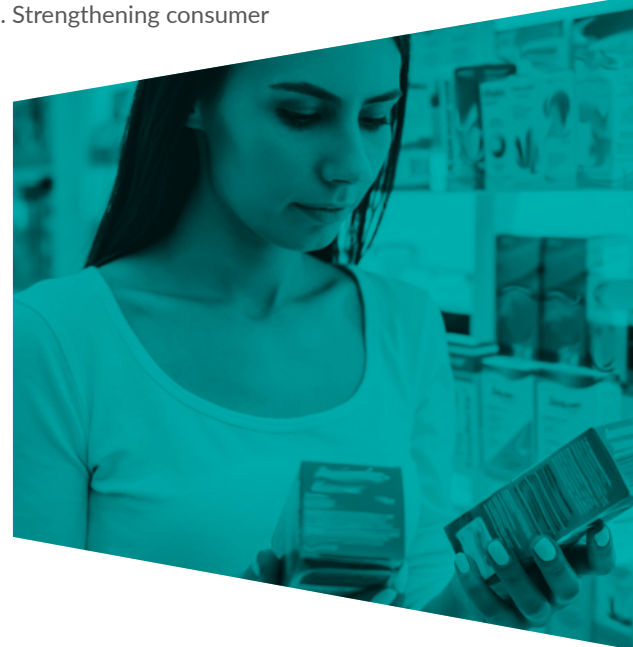
9 in 10 adults say they feel confident using an OTC medicine to manage their symptoms

in empowering them to manage their own health in the community, and in alleviating pressure on already strained healthcare services. A report by [Frontier Economics](#)  found that the use of OTC medicines saves the NHS approximately £6.4 billion in prescription and appointment costs each year, with the potential to save £1.7bn more by preventing up to 25 million unnecessary GP appointments and 5 million A&E attendances¹.

Our latest Self-Care Census highlights a growing appetite among consumers to take charge of their health using OTC medicines. However, it also showed that consumer confidence in treating self-treatable conditions was down, with an 18% drop in confidence to self-care for the common cold between 2023 and 2025³. Strengthening consumer confidence is key to enabling self-care.

Our data clearly shows that trust and familiarity with an OTC product, which is in part driven by naming and umbrella branding, is integral to consumers' confidence in managing their own self-treatable health conditions. This is supported by the fact that, of the 77% of respondents who purchase branded products, 93% use the brand name to help them find and pick the right products when browsing the shelf³.

Our latest Self-Care Census highlights a growing appetite among consumers to take charge of their health using OTC medicines.





From this, it is clear that umbrella branding helps consumers choose an appropriate OTC item to meet their self-care needs from a range of products they already know and trust. The name of a product is crucial in shaping the consumer's perception of a product. The product name communicates a series of attributes associated with that brand which traditionally includes what the medicine says it treats, the ingredient in the medicine, and the dosage form. As shown in Example 1 below, the naming hierarchy used in medicines also enables people to navigate the product range effectively and select the most appropriate option for their needs.

Product names in themselves are not evaluated in isolation as the packaging design and information play a significant role in differentiating products and enabling self-selection. Designing product packaging takes not only a considerable amount of time but also consumer insight research to ensure products can be easily understood by those who self-select for their care.

Example 1: Umbrella branded Benylin range showing naming hierarchy and product range segmentation



Naming and umbrella branding and the current national context

Greater confidence to practice self-care and use OTCs is not only beneficial for consumers but also supports wider Government objectives. As outlined within the [10 Year Health Plan](#)¹, the Government is committed to empowering individuals to play a greater role in their own health management as well as achieving the three shifts: from hospital to community, analogue to digital, and treatment to prevention². Greater emphasis on self-care and OTC use will be vital to achieving these shifts and will be key to ensuring people feel confident to manage their self-treatable conditions in the community. Improved investment will also ensure the sector can grow and innovate to further widen access to self-care products, especially when resources in the wider health and care system are limited.

As part of the UK's [Modern Industrial Strategy](#)³, the Government identified the Life Sciences sector as a key growth area⁵. Within the strategy, the Government committed to streamlining regulation and market access for products, by supporting the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to become a faster, more agile regulator⁵. However, despite the opportunities presented for consumers and wider health services, as well as the growth and innovation for manufacturers, members continue to face challenges with the MHRA when looking to introduce new products under existing naming and umbrella branding.



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The role of naming and branding in supporting growth and innovation

Naming and umbrella branding play a pivotal role in driving the growth and innovation across the OTC sector. By leveraging established brand names, companies can inspire greater consumer confidence and trust by making it more straightforward for individuals to self-select products and manage their health independently. This trust not only supports consumers but also provides manufacturers with a strong platform from which to introduce new products, as consumers are more likely to try new items under a familiar and trusted brand. 41% of respondents to our Self-Care Census were more likely to purchase a new product under a pre-existing brand over a standalone brand³.

As well as the benefits for consumers, members tell us that the ability to introduce a new product to market under existing branding (or add to an existing brand) is significantly easier for manufacturers than creating a whole new brand. Brand development is extremely resource and cost-intensive, requiring long-term financial commitment. It also takes approximately 10 years to build a brand to full recognition and profitability⁸.



The use of OTC medicines saves the NHS approximately

£6.4 billion

with the potential to save a further

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GP appointments and



5 million

A&E attendances

69% of respondents to our Reclassification Survey identified reclassification as a key growth priority over the past 10-15 years, and 85% of respondents had products that could be suitable for reclassification⁸. Marketing under an existing brand allows immediate access to an established consumer audience. This then allows greater access to self-care products, empowering people to manage their own health in the community. Not only can the use of OTC medicines save the NHS £6.4 billion, but an additional £1.7 billion can be saved with reclassification efforts by preventing unnecessary GP appointments and visits to the A&E department¹. However, if specific brand names are not achieved, then the product may not be brought to market at all as it is not commercially viable to do so⁸.





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Section 1

The role of naming and branding in consumer behaviours

Earlier this year, PAGB commissioned a survey to understand consumer trends in self-treatable conditions and self-care practices. We surveyed 4,003 individuals from a range of backgrounds to understand consumers' attitudes towards self-care, with a number of questions looking at the role of naming and umbrella branding in supporting self-selection of medicines.

Our findings clearly demonstrate the importance of naming and branding in supporting consumers to practice self-care to manage their self-treatable conditions, with data from our survey showing that 77% of all respondents would either **sometimes or always** buy branded OTCs when choosing to treat their symptoms³. This is a significant proportion and demonstrates the crucial role OTC medicines play in helping people manage their own health.

This is further supported by our qualitative data which showed that the most common reasons people buy branded medicines are due to trust, reliability, and the effectiveness embodied by branded OTCs. These factors accounted for over 60% of relevant typed answers.



Beyond this, respondents stated that branded OTC products "provided reassurance" and are "trustworthy and reliable".

Other respondents stated that they would repeat the purchases of brands due to "past, positive experiences" they have had with a product. The brand name was also linked to the credibility of the product through repeated high-quality, trusted interactions and experiences consumers had with the product.



93% of people who buy branded products use the brand name to help them find and pick the right medicine

Consumers rely on consistent naming structures and visual cues to navigate product ranges and identify the most appropriate treatment for their needs. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that of those who would purchase OTCs, 93% said that they use the brand name to find and pick the right medicine when self-selecting medicines³. This underscores the role of branding not only in building trust, but in enabling consumers to confidently self-select products based on key attributes such as treatment purpose, ingredients, and speed of action.



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When selecting a branded OTC medicine, consumers rely on specific product attributes to guide their choices. When asked what the most important thing they look for when choosing a branded OTC medicine, the most common response was 'what the medicine says it treats', with 32% of all respondents choosing this option. The ingredient was the second most important factor, with 27% of all respondents stating that this is what they look for when choosing a branded OTC. The third most important factor is the brand name, alongside the speed of the medicine.

What is the most important thing you look for when choosing a branded over-the-counter medicine?
(Average response across all respondents)

	Total Respondents
What the medicine says it treats (e.g. cold and flu, hayfever)	32%
The ingredient in the medicine (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen, cetirizine)	27%
The brand name	12%
The speed of the medicine (e.g. whether it says fast-acting, or express)	12%
N/A- I only buy generic OTC medicines	9%
The dosage form of the medicine (e.g. whether it is a tablet, gel capsule, liquid/syrup)	7%
Other- please specify	1%

These attributes are often communicated through the brand name hierarchy and other visual cues on the packaging. Example 2, below, is a good illustration of how this works. When a product is part of an umbrella brand, consistent brand hierarchy and range segmentation within the pack design help consumers differentiate between products and make informed choices.

Example 2: Umbrella Branded Anadin range showing brand hierarchy and product range segmentation





Building on the role and importance of umbrella branding in supporting self-selection, 41% of respondents stated that they would be **more likely to purchase** a new type of product under a pre-existing brand rather than a standalone brand. This demonstrates how branding fosters trust across a range of products. In addition, 61% of respondents **agreed that trust in a brand** influences their purchase of an OTC medicine, compared to only 8% of people who **disagreed**.



47% of respondents would **always trust health information** from OTC medicine brands

In addition to packaging, branded websites are increasingly recognised as trusted sources of health information. Our survey found that 47% of all respondents would **always** trust the health information from OTC medicine brands, while a further 46% said **trust would depend on the brand and/or company**.

In an online environment where misinformation is widespread, branded websites offer clear, easy-to-understand content that helps consumers make informed decisions.

Brands are not only products but credible sources of healthcare advice. Linking OTC products to well-known branded websites can further empower consumers by providing credible information, and by building trust in self-care products.

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of naming and branding in shaping consumer expectations and behaviours. When self-selecting OTCs, consumers consistently turn to branded products, trusting that they will be reliable and effective. Consumers have greater assurance in brands' credibility, quality, and effectiveness. This confidence is closely linked to the way products are presented and named, through clear brand hierarchies and range segmentation within the pack designs. This helps consumers understand what a product treats and how to identify its active ingredient. Effective umbrella branding makes it easier for people to navigate the shelf, compare options, and choose the right product for their symptoms with confidence.

On average, these preferences were consistent across demographics, but we did find some variation which highlights differences amongst groups which can be found below.

Age

Our data in Table 1 shows that consumer preferences for branded OTC medicines can depend on age. For example, we found that people from younger age groups were most likely to **always** buy branded OTCs compared to older ages groups, who were more likely to **always** buy generic OTCs, although overall purchase of branded products (**sometimes or always**) generally fell between 70 to 82% for all age categories.

Table 1: When choosing to treat your symptoms, do you buy branded over-the-counter medicines?

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
Sometimes, it depends on what the medicine is for	55%	50%	55%	58%	60%	60%
Yes, I always buy branded medicines	27%	30%	23%	14%	13%	15%
No, I always buy generic medicines	14%	16%	20%	24%	24%	21%
No, I never buy over-the-counter medicines	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%



When asked if respondents would use the brand name to help find and pick the right medicine, younger age groups were more likely to *always* use the brand name to support their self-selection compared to older age groups. This reflects the importance of branding for younger people who may rely on trusted brands to familiarise themselves with the appropriate medication for their needs.

However, as shown in Table 2 below, the overall utilisation of the brand name (**always, often and sometimes**) to help find and pick the right medicine is high across the board.

Table 2: For medicines that you pick up yourself from the shelf, do you use the brand name to help find and pick the right medicine?

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 +
Sometimes	32%	30%	35%	46%	42%	50%
Yes, often	37%	37%	35%	34%	35%	30%
Yes, always	25%	28%	21%	14%	14%	11%
Rarely	4%	3%	6%	4%	6%	7%
No, never	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%

We also asked, should an OTC medicine brand start selling a new type of product, how likely are you to purchase one of their new products over a standalone brand. When looking at the impact of age, we found that younger age groups were **more likely to purchase** the new product over the standalone brand than older age groups. 52% and 53% of respondents aged 18-24 and 25-24 were **more likely to purchase** under the pre-existing brand. However, this likelihood declined as the age group increased, dropping to 19% of consumers aged 65+. Again, this may be a result of younger consumers needing the support of a brand to help them navigate what is available and how best to treat their symptoms.

Overall, younger adults are more inclined to **always** buy branded products, with older respondents showing a stronger preference for generic medicines (however, it should be noted that when looking at those who would **sometimes** buy branded products, age makes minimal difference). Brand recognition is also particularly important for younger adults when it comes to self-selection of OTCs, with younger people being **more likely to always use the brand name** to help find and pick the right medicine compared to older adults. Yet despite favouring branded OTC medicines, younger age groups are **least likely** to cite brand trust as a factor in influencing their purchasing decisions with older age groups more likely to agree with the latter, which is an interesting insight as it appears they may not be consciously realising the impact of the brand in their purchase intent.



Brand recognition is also particularly important for younger adults when it comes to self-selection of OTCs, with younger people being more likely to always use the brand name to help find and pick the right medicine compared to older adults



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Ethnicity

Ethnicity was also found to play a role in brand trust and purchase among consumers. The ethnicities included in our survey were: White; Traveller/Irish Traveller; Asian or Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian); Black or Black British; Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups; and Other.



91% of Black or Black British respondents would buy branded OTCs compared to an average **77%** across all respondents

Our analysis shows that Black consumers had a **strong preference for branded OTCs**, with 91% of Black or Black British respondents stating they would buy branded OTCs, compared to an average of 77% across all respondents. Black and Black British respondents were also **least likely** to always buy generic medicines, with only 7% of respondents selecting this option. In comparison, “Other” ethnic groups and Bangladeshi consumers were **less likely to buy branded**

medicines at 69% and 68%. These insights highlight opportunities for industry to further build awareness and trust in branded OTCs across all communities.

Ethnicity is also a key factor in whether trust in a brand plays a role in purchase. Our findings show that 79% of Black consumers **agree that trust in a brand is important** in influencing their purchase of OTC medicines, followed by 67% of Traveller/Irish Travellers. In contrast, White, Pakistani, and Chinese groups were **less likely to agree** with this statement, at 59% for White and Pakistani respondents, and 55% for Chinese groups. Bangladeshi consumers were **least likely to agree** that trust in a brand is important as only 48% agreed with this statement. It appears that the level of trust in the brand follows a similar ethnicity pattern to those that buy a branded product, thus highlighting the link between trust and purchase of a branded product.

From our findings, we found that Black and Traveller/Irish Traveller consumers showed higher levels of reliance on and trust in branded OTCs compared to other ethnic groups. However, it is important to note that while White and Black ethnic groups were well-represented in our sample, Asian ethnic and the Traveller/ Irish Traveller subgroups had smaller sample sizes which may limit the generalisability of these findings for these groups.

It appears that the level of trust in the brand follows a similar ethnicity pattern to those that buy a branded product, thus highlighting the link between trust and purchase of a branded product.



Education Level

According to data from our Self-Care Census, differences in education level had little impact on whether people bought branded OTC medicines. Across all groups, the proportion was broadly similar: 76% of respondents with no formal education, 73% with vocational qualifications, and 77% with GCSE/O-levels reported buying branded OTCs. Those with AS/A levels or university-level education were only slightly higher at 80%.

However, consumers with higher education were more likely to favor established OTC brands when trying new products. Half (50%) of respondents with university-level education said they were **somewhat or significantly more likely to purchase** a new product under an existing OTC brand, compared to the overall average of 41%. Those with A-levels were also above average at 43%. In contrast, consumers with vocational qualifications, no formal education, or GCSE/O-levels were **less likely to do so**, with only 31–34% agreeing. This suggests that brand trust plays a stronger role among more educated consumers.

When asked about the importance of trust in a brand influencing the purchase of OTC medicines, 68% of consumers with university level education **agreed that trust in a brand is important** when influencing the purchase of an OTC medicine. 58% of consumers with vocational qualifications or A-levels also **agreed that trust in a brand was important** for the above. However, those with GCSE/O-levels or no formal education were **less likely to agree** with the above at only 53% and 51%, respectively, which was less than the average of 61%.

It is clear from our findings that consumers with university-level education showed a stronger tendency to rely on brand names when selecting OTC medicines and were more likely to trust branded websites as well as new products under established brands.



Consumers with no formal education showed high brand preference as 27% ranked the brand name as the most important factor they look for when choosing a branded OTC product which was the highest out of all education levels.

This could reflect differences in how information is accessed and trusted, particularly depending on the medium, for example via digital or in-person interaction. While other factors might be at play, these differences may reflect contrasts in health literacy or exposure to marketing translating into perceived credibility of OTC branded products.



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Employment Status

Buying branded OTC medicines also varies depending on consumers' current employment statuses. 81% of full-time employees responded that they would buy branded OTCs compared to 69% and 71% of unemployed and retired consumers, respectively. Other employment statuses were similar to the average of 77% as respondents in these categories ranged from 75% to 79% of respondents answering that they buy branded OTCs. In addition, regardless of employment status, 93% of all respondents agreed that they used a brand name to help find and pick the right OTC medicine.

Overall, 61% of respondents **agreed that trust in a brand is important** when purchasing OTC medicines. This trend was strongest among full-time employees, with 67% saying brand trust influences their purchases, followed by 60% of self-employed and 59% of part-time workers. Retired consumers were close behind at 58%. In contrast, unemployed consumers were **least likely** to value brand trust, with only 45% agreeing.

Our findings demonstrate that self-employed and full-time employed groups were **more likely to use brand names** to guide their OTC medicine choices. In contrast, unemployed and retired consumers were **less likely to purchase a new product** under a pre-existing brand than a standalone one, especially compared to employed full-time and self-employed consumers. This could be due to several factors, including the fact that self-employed and full-time employed consumers may have more disposable income than unemployed and retired consumers. Hence, as brand names are generally more expensive than generics, those with greater financial flexibility may be more inclined to choose them.

Interestingly, trust emerged as a priority for most respondents. Most employed and retired consumers stated that trust played an important role in deciding to buy a branded product. In contrast, unemployed consumers placed less emphasis on brand importance, which may reflect their lower purchase rates and the higher cost of branded options.





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Summary overview

Our findings clearly show that although there is variation in individual preferences between different groups, the majority of respondents still choose to buy branded OTCs when managing a self-treatable condition. Consumers choose branded OTCs because they trust the brand's effectiveness and the clarity that is conveyed within their name, packaging, information, or brand itself. Familiarity with brands can greatly reduce the decision-making effort for consumers, particularly for those who face challenges in accessing health information.

Our findings yield insights into consumer behaviours and potential areas for improvement in the self-care health sector, with some groups being more driven by familiarity and trust while others may be more motivated by factors such as convenience.

Importantly, our findings reaffirm that branding plays a central role in enabling self-care. These conclusions draw on feedback from over 4,000 members of the British public, echoing MHRA's commitment to patient engagement. Familiar and trusted brand names support consumers in their ability to self-select the right product. Consumers rely on consistent naming conventions, pack design, and brand hierarchies to differentiate between products and identify the one that best suits their needs. This ease of differentiation and recognition is crucial in empowering individuals to manage their health independently, reinforcing the value of branding as a key enabler of effective self-care.



These conclusions draw on feedback from **over 4,000** members of the British public, echoing MHRA's commitment to patient engagement



Section 2

The role of naming and umbrella branding in supporting growth and innovation

Naming and umbrella branding play a pivotal role in driving the growth and innovation of OTC medicine manufacturers. By leveraging established brand names, companies can inspire greater consumer confidence and trust by making it more straightforward for consumers to self-select products and manage their health independently. This trust not only supports consumers but also provides manufacturers with a strong platform from which to introduce and launch new products, as consumers are more likely to try new items under a familiar and trusted brand.

From a business perspective, effective use of naming and umbrella branding streamlines product launches, saving both time and resources that would otherwise be invested in developing entirely new brands from scratch. Introducing new products under an existing brand can accelerate market entry and reduce costs, which is crucial for sustaining innovation and responding to fast moving market demands .

Growth and innovation opportunities

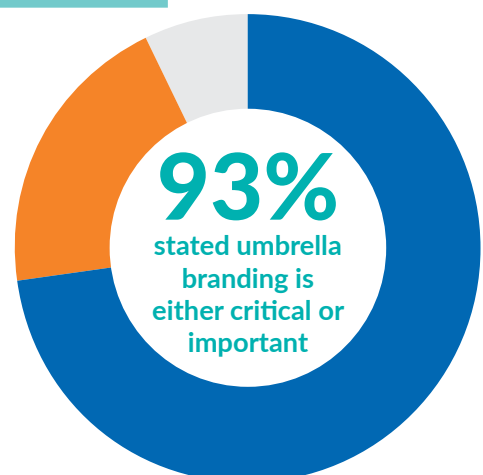
During the summer of 2025, we carried out a member survey looking at the role of naming and branding in various aspects of their business development. We found that 93% of respondents stated that umbrella branding is either critical or important to their business strategy (73% critical and 20% important). When asked why naming and branding is important to their business strategy, many members cited the positive impact it can have on consumer confidence in building trust and awareness of products.

Many of the OTC brands that are readily available to consumers have been around for many years. For example, Calpol, Lemsip, and Anadin have been around for 59, 56, and 93 years, respectively. Using existing branding to introduce new products is therefore positive for consumer awareness and is also cost-effective, given that developing brands takes an immense amount of time and resource (at least 10 years and millions of pounds in brand development)⁹.

Our recent member survey highlights the significant opportunities offered by naming and umbrella branding.

Of the 15 respondents, there were over 72 submissions which included the introduction of a new medicine name in the past five years.

Percentage of respondents stating that umbrella branding is either critical or important to their business strategy



73% Stated critical

20% Stated important




Members reported that when naming submissions face regulatory challenges, the impact can be substantial – delaying patient access and undermining commercial success. In more than half of cases where there is a challenge, companies choose to either delay, alter or not pursue a product launch. This shows the importance of having a regulatory environment that balances risk and benefit, enabling OTC manufacturers to innovate and expand access to self-care products, which in turn will deliver benefits for individuals and the wider health system.

Members also stressed the importance of preserving product names and umbrella brands. Familiarity, trust, and clarity are critical for consumers to confidently identify and use OTC products. Diluting brand identity risks eroding these benefits and could compromise appropriate product use.

Naming, umbrella branding and reclassification efforts

Whilst naming and umbrella branding is key to supporting growth and innovation for businesses who are looking to launch a new product, it also plays a key role in supporting OTC manufacturers' reclassification efforts. Reclassification, which involves changing the legal status of a medicine from prescription only to OTC, presents a key opportunity for regulatory bodies to recognise the importance of naming and umbrella branding in supporting consumer confidence to self-select products. Given the value placed on naming and branding by consumers when choosing an OTC, it is vital that regulators take this into account when evaluating manufacturer's plans to reclassify medicines under existing umbrella branding.

As has been detailed in this report, naming and umbrella branding play a key role in facilitating widened patient access to products and confidence to practice self-care, largely due to the trust and familiarity established brands offer to consumers. 77% of consumers buy branded OTC medicines to manage their self-treatable conditions, citing trust, familiarity, reliability, and effectiveness as top reasons as to why they choose branded OTC products³. Therefore, reclassifying or switching medicines to OTC, under pre-existing brands empowers consumers to self-care by giving them the confidence to choose products from a brand they know and trust.

In addition to achieving public health objectives, reclassification alleviates healthcare system burden. Statistics from our report with Frontier Economics on the [Economic Impact of OTC products](#)  in the UK have found that there is the potential to save the NHS £1.4 billion per year by switching just 5% of prescription-only medicines to OTC status¹. Greater availability of OTC medicines means less GP and A&E interactions as well as more timely access to medications that prevent the worsening of individuals' conditions.

To realise the value of naming and umbrella branding in reclassification efforts, members therefore need consistent, transparent, and evidence-based decision making approaches from MHRA to support innovation, ensure patient safety, and maintain the UK's competitiveness in the OTC sector.

Greater availability of OTC medicines means less GP and A&E interactions as well as more timely access to medications that prevent the worsening of individuals' conditions.

69% of respondents to our Reclassification Survey identified reclassification as a key growth priority over the past 10-15 years, and 85% of respondents had products that could be suitable for reclassification⁸



Conclusion

This report highlights the vital role of naming and umbrella branding in supporting consumer confidence to practice self-care, enabling growth and innovation for OTC manufacturers, and achieving wider Government ambitions to progress health and renew the economy. Evidence from our 2025 Self-Care Census and member engagement clearly demonstrates that naming and umbrella branding helps foster trust, reliability, and confidence for consumers, and should therefore be considered an asset in future development of OTC products.

Achieving this will require an enabling regulatory environment for members which balances risk and recognises the importance of naming and umbrella branding in promoting public health, driving economic growth and alleviating pressure on wider health and care services. As OTC manufacturers look to widen access to self-care products through launches and reclassification, it is vital that MHRA and industry work collaboratively to ensure consumers are able to practice self-care through a wider range of OTC products.

Working together will not only create streamlined support and efficiencies for the OTC industry and regulators, but will also strengthen consumer confidence in self-selection, advancing the collective goal of improved public health through self-care.





How naming and umbrella branding of over-the-counter products enables self-selection and self-care for consumers



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With our findings, it is important to acknowledge some limitations.

Certain demographic groups had smaller sample sizes, such as the Asian and Traveller/Irish Traveller ethnic groups. Additionally, we did not look at the intersection of variables together, such as the combined influences of income and education. Despite these limitations, the overall sample size of our survey was large and representative of other major groups, offering valuable insights into how branded OTC products shape self-care behaviours across the UK population.



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