Naming & Branding a Business in Asia

A practical checklist for choosing a name, protecting it, and building a brand that works across Hong Kong, the Philippines and wider Asia — by James Carstairs.

1. Choosing the name

- [ ] Keep it short (2–3 syllables), easy to spell, and easy to say over the phone in both English and local accents.
- [ ] Check how the name sounds and what it means in Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog — avoid words with negative or comical local meanings.
- [ ] Say it out loud with local staff and friends; numbers and word sounds matter (e.g. 8 is lucky, 4 is avoided in Chinese culture).
- [ ] Avoid names tied to one city or product if you plan to expand across borders later.
- [ ] Check that the name is not already registered: Hong Kong Companies Registry e-Search and the Philippines SEC name reservation portal.

2. Securing the name

- [ ] Check domain availability early — secure the .com plus .hk and/or .ph country domains.
- [ ] Register matching social media handles (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok) even if you won't use them yet.
- [ ] Run a trademark search: Hong Kong IPD and the Philippines IPOPHL — then file in the classes you trade in.
- [ ] Reserve the company name with the Companies Registry (HK) or SEC (PH) before printing anything.
- [ ] Keep proof of first use (dated invoices, screenshots, launch posts) — it strengthens any future trademark dispute.

3. Visual identity

- [ ] Design a simple logo that reproduces well in one colour — it must work on a shop sign, an app icon and an invoice.
- [ ] Choose brand colours with cultural awareness: red and gold signal prosperity in Chinese markets; check competitor palettes so you stand apart.
- [ ] Pick one heading font and one body font; make sure they support any local scripts you may need later.
- [ ] Create a one-page brand sheet: logo usage, colours (hex codes), fonts, and tone of voice — share it with every supplier.
- [ ] Test the identity at small sizes (favicon, WhatsApp avatar) and large sizes (signage, vehicle wrap) before committing.

4. Brand voice & localisation

- [ ] Define 3–4 brand personality words (e.g. trusted, warm, efficient) and write all copy to match them.
- [ ] Decide your language strategy per market: English works for business in HK and PH, but local-language touches build trust.
- [ ] Adapt imagery and examples to local life — avoid generic Western stock photos that don't reflect your customers.
- [ ] Be careful with humour, gestures and symbols — what is playful in one market can be offensive in another.
- [ ] Keep the core brand identical across markets; localise the message, not the identity.

5. Launch & consistency

- [ ] Register the business on Google Business Profile, Apple Maps and local directories with identical name, address and phone.
- [ ] Build a simple website that matches the brand sheet — same colours, fonts and tone as everything else.
- [ ] Apply the brand everywhere from day one: email signatures, invoices, proposals, uniforms, packaging.
- [ ] Set up a basic review and feedback loop (Google reviews, WhatsApp) and respond in the brand's voice.
- [ ] Review the brand once a year — refresh the execution if needed, but protect the name and core identity.