

technology

Herald Sun

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Search engine Nameling uses Facebook, Twitter and Wikipedia to find baby names

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Too late. North West may grow up wishing mum and dad had been using Nameling. Picture: George Pimentel/Getty Images

Source: Getty Images

CAN'T work out a name for your baby? Now there's a search engine that will do it for you.

Computer scientists from the University of Kassel, Germany, have created **Nameling** (<http://nameling.net/>), which works in a similar way to online shopping sites that recommend possible purchases based on the products you buy.

Computer scientist Folke Mitzlaff said he had the idea for the search engine in the lead up to the birth of his daughter a year ago.

He said parents today faced greater challenges in naming their children than previous generations, who often went for a traditional name or a family name.

"Because of global networking, role models, archetypes or even cautionary examples are much more present than they were just two generations ago," he said.

There are also long-term ramifications in getting it wrong in the naming stakes.

A 2005 study by the US National Bureau of Economic Research found that a child's name could influence how they performed at school, while a 2004 study, published in the American Economic Review, found someone's name could limit their employment prospects.

The first version of Nameling launched in 2012 let parents put in a name and suggest alternatives by looking at names used in similar contexts on the internet, tapping into sources such as Facebook, Twitter and Wikipedia.

Now the system takes into the search history of people using Nameling.

If you use Nameling to search for names like Kevin or Tony, the search engine knows that people who searched for those names also searched for other names.

The search engine lets people put in the names of the parents and gives a recommendation for a baby's name that best fits in with the rest of the family.

It will also provide statistical information on suggested names.

Searching for George, which is clearly a name fit for a prince, finds it ranks 17 on the list of names in the English-language Wikipedia and 62 on the German Wikipedia. Names commonly occurring with George include John, James, William and Washington.

The search engine is clever, but not perfect.

The one thing the Nameling website seems to be missing is a way of recommending it to celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Kanye West.

If you type "North" into Nameling, you get the error message "Ooops! You found a name we weren't aware of!"

If only they had known.

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