

# On the Translation of Trademark Names from the Perspective of Aesthetics

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## Abstract

Trademark is a kind of sign made of words and patterns used by enterprises on their goods. As the business card of enterprises, it plays an important role in market promotion. Its main function is to publicize products, attract potential customers and turn customers' purchase desire into consumer behavior. Therefore, successful trademark words are the catalyst for enterprises to improve their market share. In the process of translating trademark words, the translator should reproduce the aesthetic characteristics of trademark words, so as to realize the function of trademark. From the perspective of translation aesthetics, taking the trademarks of Fortune Global 500 enterprises as an example, the author analyzes the aesthetic characteristics of trademark words of major enterprises, and discusses the translation strategies of trademark words from the perspectives of meaning beauty, shape beauty, sound beauty and cultural beauty.

Key words: Trademark words; Aesthetics; Translation strategy

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, many products have entered foreign markets, and in the sales process, trademarks play an important role. Trademark can be divided into two parts: trademark names and trademark symbols. The former includes words, letters and numbers, i.e., the part of trademarks that can be expressed in words; the latter refers to the part that can be recognized but cannot be expressed in words such as graphics, three-dimensional signs and colors (Wang & Du, 2020). When a product enters a foreign market, its trademark name needs to be translated into the target language, while the symbol usually remains unchanged. Therefore, the translation of trademarks discussed by the author in this article refers to the translation of trademark names. Only trademark names that meet the aesthetics of target consumers can attract the majority of consumers. Hence, in the translation process, translators should highlight the beauty of the form, sound, meaning and culture of trademark names while conveying the product information completely.

## 2. Aesthetic Characteristics of Trademark Names

Aesthetic factors play a vital role in the process of product promotion and sales. Moreover, successful commercial advertisements are embodied with both connotative and linguistic beauty. As for connotative beauty, it includes: contextual beauty, form beauty, emotional beauty and cultural beauty. Therefore, translators should be able to appreciate the beauty of trademark names both in English and Chinese, and reproduce the aesthetic quality and content of the original trademark names as completely as possible in the translation process. First of all, translators must have a solid foundation in both English and Chinese; then, translators should have professional knowledge of commercial aesthetics and the aesthetic ability to analyze the characteristics of the original trademark names from an aesthetic point of view so that the two aesthetic qualities of the source language and the target language are the same.

### 2.1 Form Beauty of Trademark Names

The form beauty of trademark names refers to the beauty of its shape or structure. In the translation process, the form beauty of trademark names means that the translated version of trademarks or brands uses beautiful

words that are similar to the form and characteristics of the original version. For example, (华润集团 Hua Run Ji Tuan) China Resources Group (pharmaceuticals), (碧桂园 Bi Gui Yuan) Country Garden Holdings (real estate), (正威国际 Zheng Wei Guo Ji) Amer International Group (metal products), (美的集团 Mei Di Ji Tuan) Midea Group (electronics, electrical equipment), (苏宁易购 Su Ning Yi Gou) Suning.com Group (specialty retail), (兴业银行 Xing Ye Yin Hang) Industrial Bank (bank), and other trademark names of Chinese companies are inherently aesthetic in character, because 润 (Run), 碧 (Bi), 威 (Wei), 美 (Mei), 宁 (Ning) and 兴 (Xing) are all positive and beautiful words in Chinese, which reflects enterprises' psychology of seeking beauty to give consumers a good feeling. Furthermore, for the translation of foreign trademark names such as Carrefour (家乐福 Jia Le Fu) (food and grocery stores), AXA (安盛 An Sheng) (life and health insurance), Tesco (乐购 Le Gou) (food and grocery stores), Johnson & Johnson (强生 Qiang Sheng) (pharmaceuticals), Peugeot (标致 Biao zhi) (vehicles and parts), and Vinci (万喜 Wan Xi) (engineering and construction), the Chinese characters 乐 (Le), 福 (Fu), 安 (An), 盛 (Sheng), and 喜 (Xi) can mean auspicious, and translators have fully catered to the aesthetic needs of Chinese consumers.

## 2.2 Meaning Beauty of Trademark Names

The meaning beauty of trademark names refers to its contextual and content beauty, which means that trade names set off a certain context through the associative meaning of words or the connotative combination of constituent words, so that people can have rich and beautiful associations, and people's desire and pursuit for beauty can be provoked (Hu & Chen, 2000). For instance, in Huawei Harmony Operating System (OS), there is a blue horizontal line below letter O. Its designer says that the inspiration for the horizontal line comes from the Chinese character Dan (旦) which first appeared in the oracle bone script. Its glyph is a circle with a horizontal line underneath, signifying the sun rising from the horizon, which can be derived to mean the beginning of the universe; and at the same time, the blue color symbolizes the deep color of the universe, reflecting the interconnected nature of Harmony OS. Therefore, the design and intention behind this brand name have indicated the contextual beauty of the trademark names. Another example is Nestle (food). In German, nestle means little bird's nest, and in English, it means settling down comfortably and snuggling. The earliest product of Nestle is milk cereal, and its popularity stems from the story behind the brand telling the founder Henry took in and fed an abandoned child with milk cereal. Eventually, the milk cereal spread all over the world and Nestle thus takes a triumphant step forward. To this day, Nestle products use this name because it represents happiness, hope, love, nature and nutrition. When consumers buy products, although they pay much attention to the overall cost performance of the products, what resonates more with consumers' values is the story behind brands. Nestle is cleverly using the trademark name and the story behind it to create a context of happiness and love, thus attracting a large number of consumers.

## 2.3 Sound Beauty of Trademark Names

The sound beauty of trademark names refers to phonetic beauty. Most English trademark names consist of loud vowels with large openness (mainly diphthongs and long vowels) and consonants with little obstruction and easy spelling features. Because of those vowels and consonants, the pronunciation of trademark names is crisp, loud and easy to remember and spread (Zhu, 2010). For example, the pronunciation of trademark names such as Compass Group (food service), Mckesson (health care), Daimler (vehicles and parts), Amazon (Internet services and retail), and Canon (computers and office equipment) are rhythmic and crisp. In addition, the sound beauty of trademark names is also reflected in its rhyme beauty, which means that the pronunciation of trademark names is loud and has a strong stretch. The pronunciation mostly uses rhyme such as head rhyme, meta rhyme and stacked rhyme to achieve rhyme harmony and easiness to remember. For example, in trademark names such as Samsung Electronics (electronics, electrical equipment), Sysco (food), Humana (health care), Volvo (vehicles and parts), Woolworths (food stores and grocery stores), Schlumberger (oil and gas equipment and services), the repeated use of the same or similar consonants or vowels creates the rhythmic beauty of trademarked names.

## 2.4 Cultural Beauty of Trademark Names

The cultural beauty of trademark names refers to the fact that trademark names themselves carry a rich culture, and the process of translation is the process of docking two cultures. The acceptance of a certain commodity by consumers is a manifestation of cultural demand and cultural identity, and a successful trademark name should reflect the history and culture of a country or nation from the side and meet the national culture and demand of consumers. For example, the Chinese translation for the U.S. brand Citibank is 花旗银行 (Hua Qi Yin Hang). The translation has no direct connection with the source language. It is actually derived from the characteristics of the U.S. flag. When the bank entered the Shanghai market, the red stripes, blue background and white stars on the rising U.S. flag were called 花旗 (Hua Qi) by the people, which was a kind of recognition of American culture by the general consumers. Therefore, the bank was also called 花旗银行 (Hua Qi Yin Hang), and the translation is still in use today. Hence, the translation of trademark names should be an organic combination of cultures of the source language and the translated language, so as to reproduce the cultural beauty of the source language.

## 3. Discussion on the Translation Methods of Trademark Names

The famous American linguist Eugene Nida put forward the translation theory of dynamic equivalence in 1969, or the theory of functional equivalence, in which the equivalence includes four aspects: a. lexical equivalence; b. syntactic equivalence; c. chapter equivalence; d. stylistic equivalence. Nida believes that "meaning is the most important, and form is the second most important" (Guo, 2000: 67). Form will imprison the cultural meaning of the source language. Therefore, in the translation of trademark names, translators should take Nida's functional equivalence theory as the principle of translation, so as to accurately reproduce the aesthetic quality of the source language in the translated language.

### 3.1 Transliteration

Transliteration is the conversion of the pronunciation form of a trademarked name into another pronunciation form of the target language, while preserving the phonetics of the source language. For example, the translation of trademark names such as Metro (Ma De Long), Paccar (Pa Ka), Mazda (Ma Zi Da), Bayer (Bai Er), Walmart (Wo Er Ma), Chevron (Xue Fo Long) uses the transliteration method, reflecting the phonetic beauty of the source language. Another example is the brand of Coca-Cola. In the 1920s, when this brand was produced in Shanghai, its Chinese name was 蝌蚪啃蜡 (Ke Dou Keng La), which was not well accepted by consumers, and thus, consumers' awareness of the product were little. As a result, the export company responsible for overseas business offered a reward for the translation of the brand, and Jiang Yi, a Shanghai professor at the time, won the gold medal with the translation 可口可乐 (Ke Kou Ke Le). The translation 可口可乐 (Ke Kou Ke Le) not only reproduces the phonetic rhyme of the source language, but also contains the Chinese cultural word 乐(Le), which stands for happiness. Therefore, the translation conveys the characteristics of the product to consumers. In summary, the translation of trademark names should conform to the national aesthetic psychology. The aesthetic function of trademark names is mainly reflected in catering to the national aesthetic psychology and beauty-seeking psychology of consumers. So, when foreign brands are introduced to China, they should skillfully use or cater to this aesthetic psychology of the Chinese nation (Hong, 2006). For instance, the translation 可口可乐 (Ke Kou Ke Le) reproduces the beauty of sound, meaning and culture, reflecting Chinese popular culture and catering to the aesthetic psychology of Chinese consumers.

### 3.2 Literal Translation

The literal translation refers to the method that does not change the form and content of the original text. The literal translation can retain the form of the original text more completely and can directly translate the beauty of the original trademarked names. There are examples such as Shell (Ke Pai 壳牌) (oil refining), Microsoft (Wei Ruan 微软) (computer software), General Electric (Tong Yong Dian Qi 通用电气) (industrial machinery), Facebook (Lian Shu 脸书) (Internet services and retail), Crown (Huang Guan 皇冠) (automobiles).

However, since the differences between the English and Chinese languages are much greater than their similarities, the literal translation method is not widely applicable and should only be used when the two cultures are compatible. Nevertheless, many Chinese companies use Chinese pronunciation for the translation of their trademark names, such as Yankuang Group (mining, crude oil production), Honghai Precision Industry (electronics, electrical equipment), China Baowu Steel Group (metal products), Pingan Group (life and health insurance), Huawei Investment & Holding (network, communication equipment), etc. Although Westerners believe that the targeted audience of Chinese pronunciation is limited to Chinese consumers and the Chinese pronunciation does not meet the aesthetic needs of consumers in other countries, with China's increasing international status, more and more Chinese products are recognized by global consumers, and consumers in other countries are gradually starting to accept Chinese pronunciation as international trademarks.

### 3.3 Creative Translation

The creative translation does not stick to the form of trademarks, but focuses on the function of trademark names. For example, Lenovo used to be translated into English as Legend; however, this English name had been registered in many other countries before, and Lenovo's products cannot use the trademark Legend for overseas marketing. Therefore, Lenovo created its own word: Lenovo, in which, Le comes from the previous part of Legend, remaining the meaning of Legend; novo is a Latin root, representing new ideas, innovation. So, the whole word means innovative thinking and thought innovation, reflecting the core innovation culture of Lenovo's brand. It can be concluded that the translated name is only detached from the linguistic form, but obtains the equivalent aesthetic quality. There are many examples of creative translation of trademark names. For instance, if Volkswagen is translated literally, the name will be bland and uninteresting, and it will not win the favor of consumers quickly. Its logo is composed of the V of Volks and the W of Wagen, and when the logo is turned upside down, it is similar to the Chinese character 众 (Zhong). Therefore, it is translated by the creative translation method as 大众 (Da Zhong), meaning the national car, which is not only in line with the original intention of the brand founder, but also brings consumers a sense of affinity. Similarly, for the U.S. home building supplies retailer Home Depot, if it is directly translated or transliterated as 家的仓库 (Jia De Cang Ku), the Chinese version will be slightly rigid. Although it can achieve its purpose, but it cannot bring the comfort as the name 家得宝 (Jia De Bao). When consumers buy the products, they can have the feeling of obtaining a treasure. Therefore, when there is a cultural difference between the source language and the translated language, the creative translation method can resolve the conflict brought by this difference.

Take the translation of Chinese and Western numbers as an example, the meaning of the same number in Chinese and Western cultures is different, and the translation of fuzzy numbers cannot stick to the numerical value of the number itself. Translators should carefully choose appropriate words to translate the image and momentum of numbers. For instance, the English translation of 中国五矿集团公司 (Zhong Guo Wu Kuang Ji Tuan Gong Si) is China Minmetals Corporation. If it is directly translated as Five Minerals, the target readers will have misunderstanding. In ancient China, five refers to water, wood, gold, fire and earth, and the company is mainly engaged in the development, production, trade and comprehensive services of metals and minerals. Therefore, the choice of Minmetals, a combination of minerals and metals, as the name of the company, not only represents the image of the company, but also directly reflects the main business scope of the company. It is thus possible to obtain aesthetic effects through creative translation that direct translation cannot bring. It can be concluded that "the creative translation is the most flexible method, which can set aside the restrictions of the form and pronunciation of trademark names in the source language and give maximum play to imagination and creativity to create a new term that is loud and eye-catching and perfectly fits the cultural environment and aesthetic psychology of the target language according to the nature and characteristics of a product" (Gu, 2012: 142). The use of creative translation to translate trademark names is able to reproduce the aesthetic quality similar to that of the trademark names in the source language. Therefore, creative translation is used more frequently in trademark translation.

## 4. Conclusion

In summary, the trademark name is the carrier of the basic information of a commodity, the unique identity of the commodity, and moreover, the mark where a certain type of commodity distinguishes itself from other commodities in the market. Only when a commodity has a trademark, it has its own unique value and can clearly position itself in the market (Cui, 2019). Therefore, in the translation process, translators must recognize the deeper meaning of trademark names, and should also be aware that the translation of trademark names is not a process of rigid conversion between English and Chinese, but a cross-cultural communication activity and an aesthetic activity. The most direct purpose of the translation is to let consumers familiarize with a product and its efficacy, so as to stimulate their desire to buy the product. The indirect purpose is to promote an enterprise and open up the market, so as to bring commercial benefits to the enterprise. Therefore, translators should translate trademark names through literal translation, transliteration and creative translation strategies to directly or indirectly reproduce the aesthetic quality and aesthetic effect of trademark names in the source language, so as to convey the attributes of commodities to the maximum extent, attract consumers, and trigger their desire to buy the commodities.

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