

# Treatment of Culture Images in Trademark Translation

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With the rapid development of the global economy and the increasingly frequent exchanges between different cultures, the internal and external trade of various countries is faced with new opportunities and challenges. Trademark translation is not only the transformation and transition of languages, but also the translation of many cultural images. The main obstacle in trademark translation is the cultural cognitive difference caused by languages, nationality, and environment. These cultural differences bring some difficulties to trademark translation. Based on the cross-cultural awareness, this thesis discusses the cultural factors in the translation of trademarks, and on this basis, summarizes the principles to be followed in the translation of cross-cultural trademarks, and finally puts forward the corresponding translation strategies.

*Keywords:* translation of trademarks, cultural differences, influential factors in translation, translation strategies

## Introduction

Every year, over 40,000 products are circulated in the global market. However, due to cultural differences in business English translation, 85% of these products experience a loss in market share when entering the target country's market. In actual trademark translation, literal translations are often used between words and phrases because translators are not familiar enough with foreign cultures. As a result, the translated versions of these trademarks tend to be rigid and lack the original linguistic charm. The same product may be highly popular in one country but have poor sales in another. In most cases, these poor trademark translations are attributed to cultural differences. Therefore, if the cultural connotations of a product can align with the aesthetic standards or cultural customs of foreign consumers in the target market, the likelihood of achieving success will greatly increase.

Trademark brand culture has become a crucial factor for multinational companies in marketing and sales. The trademark name serves as the most significant manifestation of brand culture. Exploring the influence of subtle cultural factors in trademark brand culture on the translation of English and Chinese trademark names requires further research through qualitative and quantitative methods. Therefore, how to flexibly handle cultural imagery in trademark translation has also emerged as one of the future research trends.

## The Translation and Classification of Trademarks

The definition provided by Chinese scholars is as follows:

1. The logo or mark (image, pattern, or text) on the surface or packaging of a product, used to distinguish it from other similar products;

2. The logo used by enterprises, institutions, and individual businesses for the production, manufacturing, processing, selection, or sale of their products. It is generally presented in the form of text, pattern, or a combination of both, and is usually labeled on products, packaging, brochures, and advertisements;

3. A special mark placed on items or products of a specific brand to distinguish them from similar products sold by other manufacturers.

From the above definitions, the uniqueness of a trademark can be inferred:

1. It is a logo or mark on a product or packaging, indicating relevant information such as origin, production date, and ingredients;

2. It is used to differentiate a product from similar products, as each trademark is unique and protected by law;

3. Its components consist of characters, patterns, or a combination of both, often presented to consumers in a visually appealing manner.

### **The Importance of Cultural Image**

Trademarks hold significant meaning as special symbols that allow consumers to recognize brands and enhance sales. Therefore, trademark translation is a unique form of translation. From a linguistic perspective, trademarks are always composed of words and are not limited by the translation effects of sentences, paragraphs, or chapters. The speculative influences in other language translations do not exist here. Words are the only linguistic units that make up trademarks and are the entire content of trademark translation. Based on the simple form of trademarks, traditional theories and methods of trademark translation mainly focus on the visual and auditory external features of trademarks. Yang Liu proposed the following translation methods: (a) transliteration; (b) paraphrase; (c) transliteration of proper nouns; and (d) combination of numerals. Guo Shangxing, on the other hand, offered his own understanding: (a) transliteration; (b) paraphrase; (c) combination of sound and meaning; (d) paraphrase; and (e) auspicious translation. Almost all methods emphasize the linguistic features of trademarks, such as form, sound, and meaning. However, the treatment of non-linguistic features, such as cultural imagery carried by trademarks, is often considered secondary or subordinate. In the practice of trademark translation, these theories cannot be ignored, but they also have some shortcomings. Firstly, they limit the translator's thinking, preventing them from treating trademark translation as an audience with similar cultural mentality, aesthetic taste, and value orientation. Secondly, based on the above theories, many successful translations lack reasonable explanations. Just like the artistic creation of a brand, trademark translation involves professional understanding from various disciplines and fields, such as linguistics, sociology, psychology, marketing, advertising, law, etc. From the perspective of the creativity, structure, and function of trademarks, the cultural imagery of trademarks is more important than their literal meanings.

Just as a name holds meaning for a person, a trademark is not only a representative of a brand or a product's identity, but also allows people to perceive the characteristics, values, and cultural connotations of the brand to some extent. For a specific product, it is becoming increasingly important to choose a trademark that has corresponding characteristics and leaves a visual impression on the audience.

### **Flexible Methods of Transferring Culture Images in Trademark Translation**

#### **Naturalization of Culture Images**

In order to cater to the psychology of consumers from the target language countries or regions and expand the market, it is necessary to naturalize the cultural images of trademarks. For example, in 7-ups (七喜), “喜” is

the word that Chinese people are happy with. In Chinese culture, it has the auspicious meaning. In Chinese, there are many idioms contains “喜”, such as “喜气洋洋”, “双喜临门”, “喜笑颜开”, “喜获丰收”, and so on. “七喜” is a trademark full of great and auspicious meaning, which caters to the Chinese psychological appetite for “喜”. Thus its products sell well in China. Kellogg’s (家乐氏) food is also a naturalized trademark. “乐” is a popular word among Chinese, giving people the cultural image of happiness and luck. “氏” has a typical flavor of Chinese family that gives people a general affinity of traditional Chinese food. This word makes Chinese want to eat it. It is worth mentioning that while many enterprises are trying to add some foreign flavor to their products, P&G has made great efforts to naturalize the cultural image. Its efforts have been paid off by products selling well. First of all, the translation of the company’s name P&G into “宝洁” has almost no sign of exotic flavor. For the translation of its sub-brands, safeguard is translated into “舒肤佳”, Rejoice into “飘柔”, and Head & Shoulders into “海飞丝”. Almost every brand conforms to Chinese culture and has strong image of Chinese flavor. The author thinks that the successful operation of this corporation in China is attributed to the naturalized translation of its trademarks.

### **Alienation of Culture Images**

When the target country has expertise in the production of certain goods, or it enjoys its reputation overseas, the alienation of culture image when translating trademarks is helpful to improve the image of the goods. If the consumers from the target country have the mentality of worshipping foreign countries, this method can stimulate consumers’ purchasing enthusiasm, improve the promotion of commodities, and greatly realize the function of the trademarks. Trademarks, like “McDonald” (麦当劳), “Kentucky” (肯德基), “Motorola” (摩托罗拉), “Louis Cardi” (路易·卡迪), “Pierr Cardin” (皮尔·卡丹), and “Cadillac” (凯迪拉克) are all full of exotic flavor. Most of these trademarks are made up of people’s names, corporations’ names, places’ names. And they are often transliterated to retain the beauty of the original sound. They possess exotic flavors of countries that own these trademarks, indicating that the quality and levels of these products are relatively high. Many domestically produced goods also have exotic trademarks for the same reason. For example, “Sportsman” bicycles are made in Hangzhou. The English word of the trademark means “athlete”, giving an image of health and vigor of life. But its Chinese name is “斯波兹曼”. In fact, the homonym of “曼” and “慢” in this trademark is not suitable in terms of transportation. However, as the full name is full of exotic flavor, Chinese still think that they are imported goods travelling across the sea. As long as the quality is good, it does not matter if it is “慢”, anyway, “more haste, less speed”.

### **Duplication of Culture Images**

Image duplication refers to the process in which a trademark can produce almost equivalent culture images in the target language after being translated. The trademarks are mainly translated by literal translation and free translation. For example, “小天鹅” (little swan) washing machine, “Blue Girl” (蓝妹) beer, “Fair Lady” (贵妇人) bedding, “联想” (Legend) computer, “Crown” (皇冠) car, etc. The translated names produced by duplication of images basically maintain the culture image of the original text and conform to the skopos theory. For example, Balance (均衡) coffee milk is balanced in nutrition and the Total (总汇) breakfast food carton is complete in categories. The trademark of “皇朝” wine is translated into “Dynasty” in English. It can be known directly that the translated trademark is the same as that in the original version, indicating that the wine has a long history and noble taste. Its advertising effect is self-evident.

### Compensation of Culture Images

When the culture image from the trademarks cannot be reproduced in the trademarks, it will lead to the loss of the culture image. In order to maintain the persuasive effects of trademarks, the method of compensation can be adopted. For example, the Chinese image of the “四通” computer is proficiency in everything, implying that the computer has excellent functions and extraordinary quality. If it is translated into the “Stone”, the culture image of “通” is gone. However, the “Stone” has a solid meaning in English, which gives computers of this brand a new culture image of durability. Although the culture of the source language is missed, it creates a new auspicious culture image on the basis of retaining the same sound of the source language, compensating the loss of culture image in the transliteration of the source language. The gain is greater than the loss. “固特异” tyre’s English name is a direct reference to Charles Goodyear, the inventor of vulcanized rubber. “Goodyear” has the culture image of good luck and peace, compensating for the lost culture image of the original trademark. There are many more other examples, such as the translation of “乐凯” into “Luck” and “Goldenlion” into “金利来”.

### Deletion of Culture Images

The positive culture images of some trademarks with strong political and local colors depend on a specific political background or a specific cultural tradition. When translating into different languages, the political background and cultural tradition on which they rely for survival will not exist. Therefore, the original culture images must be deleted. East Wind “东风柴油机”, for example, would be unwelcome in Britain, where East Wind is an ominous sign, as the west wind in China. Shelley’s famous poem is “ode to the west wind”, not “east wind blows and drums beat”. The transliteration of “东风” and the deletion of its original culture image are considered appropriate. Other examples are “中意” (Zhong Yi) refrigerators, “长虹” (Chang Hong) appliances, and “孔府宴” (Kongfuyan Wine). The main method to delete the original culture image is to discard the meaning and conform to the sound. Taking the “Kongfuyan Wine” as an example, the wine belongs to high-quality goods, and in its advertising slogan “Confucius drinks “Kongfuyan Wine”, makes the great works”, the Chinese trademark highly reflects the characteristics of Chinese culture. However, when translated into “Kongfuyan Wine”, not only can its positive and profound culture image be deleted, its denotative meaning becomes blurred (wine is wine that made from grapes in English, but this product is genuine liquor).

It is desirable to delete the negative culture images generated by trademarks in the culture of the target language. The way to solve this contradiction is to apply the above methods comprehensively, try to keep the positive culture image of the original trademarks, and use the culture image with similar functions to compensate or replace. For example: “长城”—“The Great Wall”, “美加净”—“MAXAM”, “彩虹”—“IRICO”, etc.

### Substitution of Culture Images

Substitution of culture images refers to the replacement of culture images in the source language which are in conflict with the target language culture by cultural images that meet the aesthetic requirements of the target language’s culture. French perfume, for example, “Poison”. The trademark is based on western strong rebellious attitude. Its most exciting cultural image manifests the special quality of the perfume, catering to the western aesthetic psychology. However, the Chinese are appreciating peace; there is no such the rebellious spirit as Americans. If the trademark is in literal translation for “毒药”, it will certainly arise strong resistance among consumers. Therefore, the original culture must be replaced during the translation. Through the ingenious replacement of the pronunciation of the trademarks in the source language, it is translated into “百爱神”, and the original extremely aggressive “poison” image is replaced by the image of “爱” with a meaning of beauty, which

complies with the consumers' psychology of the Chinese people. A manufacturer in Tianjin has a joint venture with a Japanese wood company to produce a range of cosmetics. The English trademark of this product is "Kiss Me", which literally means "吻我". The purpose is to express that this product can make women more attractive, sexy, and glamorous. In western culture, it has a positive and passionate culture image. But Chinese culture advocate implication. "吻我" gives people the sense with frivolous culture with a negative image. And the Chinese traditional culture conflicts with this. If the literal translation cannot appeal to consumers, but making consumers to reject using this product, use the implicit beauty image to replace the original trademark's flighty image, which leaves a good impression to consumers. This is a successful translation.

### **Addition of Culture Images**

The most typical example of image addition is the famous German car "Mercedes-Benz" (奔驰). Benz was originally a name without special culture image, but the translator selected the word with ingenuity, so that people could know it was a kind of transport vehicle with excellent performance as soon as they saw the trademark. Olay, a famous French cosmetic product, is translated as "玉兰油", which not only indicates that the product is oil paste, but also adds a romantic and elegant culture image. Trademarks, such as Timmy's (添美食) fast food chain and Johnson (强生) baby products are originally names of people, places, or companies. When translated into Chinese, they all add beautiful images that can indicate the nature, quality, or use of the products. In general, the more positive images are attached to a trademark word, the more significant it is, the easier it will be remembered by consumers, and the more favorable it will be for product sales.

### **Conclusion**

The culture image of trademark is of great significance, especially for establishing a good trademark image and developing the selling market. Examining the translation of trademarks from the perspective of cultural imagery not only helps to grasp the essence of the translation of trademarks, but also helps translators find appropriate translation strategies and plays a crucial role in the impartiality of translation criticism. Actually, in trademark translation, cultural image processing has always been a core problem. Only in the full understanding of the original language, translators can translate trademarks correctly on the basis of the cultural image. The translators should apply the idea of "teleology" translation, and reasonably construct functional equivalence in the target language (or even better than the original trademark) of the cultural image, to cater to the aesthetic psychology of the target language culture and to create a satisfactory translation. They can hence realize the combination of trademarks' coax functions and aesthetic functions, so as to place the product in a preponderant position in the fierce international competition.

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