

An Analysis of Cultural Differences and Brand Name's Translation

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With the development of society and economy, the trend of economic globalization has become unavoidable. The competition of the global trend is acute. A good brand name is vital for building the necessary bond between an organization and its consumers. The paper aims to analyze a large number of brand names and their influences, coupled with the cultural differences, translation theories, and business value. Then conclude some effective brand names translation principles and techniques to help enterprises to promote their products.

Keywords: cultural differences, brand name translation, translation principle of brand

Introduction

With the development of global economy, brands have been infiltrating through every field of the society and have become one of the essential parts in people's life. Trademark translation, whether from Chinese to English or from English to Chinese, includes the successful translation of the essence of its mother tongue. What's more, it can also attract the customers' eyeballs. Therefore, there should be different translation methods and techniques for different cultures. However, due to the great differences between Chinese and western cultures, trademarks based on different cultural backgrounds have different meanings. In order to effectively issue a trademark, translation needs to take into account the differences between the local and foreign languages, so that consumers with different cultural backgrounds can become accustomed to it, thus enhancing the reputation of the enterprise and forming a solid foundation for the development of international market.

Literature Review

According to the book *Original Culture* published by British anthropologist E. B. Tylor in 1871, culture is a complex whole, including knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs, and people as members of society. People from different countries, regions, and cultural backgrounds have differences in national psychology, values, aesthetic tastes, religious practices, and so on. Language is a mirror of national culture, and these differences between Chinese and western cultures are also reflected in the trademark language.

Chen Lian (2002) mentioned that there are many problems in the translation of trademarks in China, including the political metaphor in translation of some trademarks, the indecent translation of brand name translation, and the use of pinyin for trademark translation, etc.

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Dai Rong (2006) proposed two strategies for trademark translation in different cultures: One is to use the “alienation method” to transliterate, translate, or directly apply the original trademark to preserve the content of the original trademark; another is to use the “adaptation method” to respect the language and culture of the target market, and generally use the semantic translation method to translate the original trademark into the language of the target market.

Wang Yiliang and Ren Jie (2014) analyzed the application of the principle of cultural equivalence in trademark translation. They believed that cultural differences include cultural differences in objects, digital cognition, and color perception.

Cultural Differences in Brand Name's Translation

Culture influences, creates, and dominates people's way of life. People from different countries and regions have differences in national psychology, values, aesthetic tastes, and religious customs and so on. These differences between Chinese and western cultures are also reflected in the trademark language. The following sections explain the impact of different aspects of culture on trademark translation and the causes of the differences.

Differences in Customs and Beliefs

Different people have different religious beliefs. There are different taboos under the influence of different religious beliefs. Religion is also an important part of human culture. It reflects the differences in culture in terms of beliefs and taboos. For example, countries that believe in Islam avoid using pigs and dogs as trademarks. In the Christian culture, people think number 13 is unlucky because it is reminiscent of Judah in the last supper. The Chinese prefer not to use number four because “四” has the same pronunciation as “死”. Therefore, the use of these religious taboos should be paid extra attention in trademark translation.

Differences in Social Values

Social values are the core of the entire cultural system, including people's attitudes toward time, wealth, achievement, and innovation, thus directly affecting people's consumption ways. Western culture with individualistic value orientation values variation, and its national character is independent, explicit, and daring to innovate. Chinese people pursue the value orientation of collectivism, valuing the introverted and implicit character, and seeking stability, paying attention to frugality, and valuing tradition and history. In China, people's consumption mentality is the pursuit of auspiciousness, practicality, and people often expect a long-lasting, affirmative, and real guarantee. For instance, “旺旺 (biscuits)”, “嘉士利 (food)”, “金福缘 (wine)”, “永久 (bicycle)”, “捷安特 (bicycle)”, “佐尔美 (clothing)”, and other trademarks all have auspicious and beautiful meaning.

Differences in Cultural Association

Different nationalities have their own unique understanding and aesthetics to the objective world and nature. Therefore, the words of the same rational concept will have different associative meanings attached to the concept of the vocabulary itself. A language that can bring people good psychological associations and aesthetic tastes in a certain culture does not necessarily lead to the same feelings of people in another culture. For example, a Chinese electric fan brand name is “蝙蝠”. Because “蝙蝠” is the similar pronunciation as “福”, bats are regarded as auspicious animals in China, and are also considered as a symbol of happiness in Japan and Korea. But westerners hate this kind of animal. In western culture, bats are usually a symbol of evil.

The Principle of Brand Name's Translation

A successful trademark translation should not only keep the essence of the original text, and have the same effect as the original text, but also conform to the trademark psychology of the consumers. Up to now, various translation principles have been proposed, such as the influential criterion of "faithfulness", "expressiveness", and "elegance" (信, 达, 雅) as put forward by Yan Fu and the principle of functional equivalence proposed by Nida. Besides, there are also many other principles of brand name's translation, such as informative principle, inductivity principle, auspicious principle.

Informative Principle

The translation of a trademark name must conform to the nature and characteristics of the product itself, embody the positioning concept in the original text, and play the role of informing. What's more, the translated brand names should be easy to spell, write, and memory. Good brand names should show as much information as possible. For example, an English brand name "Swatch" is a kind of watch, "Kentucky Fired Chicken" is a kind of fast food, an English brand name "The Body Shop" for a sort of cosmetic.

Inductivity Principle

The final goal of the trademark is to attract the attention of consumers and to stimulate their desire to purchase the product. "Rejoice", a joint-venture Shampoo product, is a classic example of the guiding principle in trademark translation. Instead of transliterating the word into "欢欣" or "欢乐", the translator boldly adopted a free translation, using the word "飘柔" to express the excellent performance of its products. At the same time, this translation also has strong inductivity; generally speaking, consumer group of the shampoo is the female; women are always dreaming of having a soft and bright hair. It's the consumer's dream, to entice people to choose this product. When we translate, we should hold on the principle of inductivity. "回力" is translated as "Warier". In China "回力" means "回天之力". In western countries it means someone who is very brave. When we wear them, we will be warier and walk on the way to success with endless power. It is undoubted that everyone wants to be successful.

Auspicious Principle

The brand name translation cannot let the consumer associate with something bad; otherwise even good product also cannot sell out. This requires translators to take full account of cultural and historical background when translating trademarks. For example, if gold lion was translated into "金狮", it would not be popular in China. Because it sounds like "金失", no one wants to lose their money. But it is translated into "金利来", it gets popular among China, because they want to be rich as quick as possible. Japanese Honda automobile manufacturer launched a Lexus-branded Luxury Sedan. When the car went on sale in China, managers decided to translate Lexus as "凌志". People in our mainland may associate it with a poem "久有凌云志, 重上井冈山". As a consequence, translators should carefully select the auspicious words.

Methods of Translation

Liberal Translation

Liberal translation refers to transferring meanings and functions instead of the original meaning due to the cultural and psychological differences between the source language and the target language. It focuses on the deep meaning of the products. Here are some examples. Spite is translated in Chinese as "雪碧". This kind of

drink is popular in China. Just think that if it was translated as “斯普莱特”, people in China would not know the what it is. A car or food? We may think like this. But if Sprite is translated as “小妖精”, it would be a proper translation. Because in China, “小妖精” means someone who is very cute and piquant. Men always use it to describe their daughters and girlfriends. They love their daughters and girlfriends, but sometimes they are too naughty. They can do nothing but spoil them. If translated as this, this may be popular among girls. It can show their beauty, charm, and naughtiness.

Transliteration

Transliteration means to keep the aspect of the same or familiar pronunciation. I have noticed many brand names that use this method; they are all successful. For example, Chanel is translated as “香奈儿”. Maybe in Chinese, we do not know what 香奈儿 means. But in our traditional culture, “香” means something smells great. It can show the quality of life of a woman. It also shows their beauty and elegance to others. Another example is Lancome; it is translated as “兰蔻” in Chinese. In China, “豆蔻之年” means a girl who is 13 or 14 years old. It sells well in China, because everyone wants to be young; if I use this cosmetic I will be younger and younger. My skin is very good, white, and full of water just like a 13-year-old girl.

Blending

When the source names of brands are verbose and boring for consumers to remember, we often use blending. According to the principle of brevity, the brand name should express the characteristics of the product with the least words. Combine two or three words into one word by cropping them and selecting the beginning or end to form a new word. Combing “new” and “wit”, the group “新意达集团” is translated into “Newit”. Lenovo combines “legend” and “nova”. A famous supermarket Walmart combines the name of its inventor “Sam Walton” and the word “market”. Comparing with other principles of translation, this kind of method is not very difficult; we can see that the brand name is created by the translators.

Conclusion

Nowadays, global economy has been developing prosperously. All of the products can be exported to the global market. As the implementation of reforming and opening-up, more and more goods have been exported and imported. Under this circumstance, brand name translation has become increasingly important in our daily life. This article aims to introduce cultural differences and principles of translation to provide some methods of translation. Through the analysis and comparison of a large number of interpreting brand names and the research of their influences, coupled with the cultural differences, translation theories, and business value, I concluded some effective brand names translation theories and techniques to help enterprises promote their products. When we translate a trademark, we should pay attention to the thought differences, language differences, and social value. The name of them must satisfy consumers and show their cultural characteristics. Finally, the modes of thought and ethnic preference should also be taken into consideration.

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