



A Contrastive Study of Brand Names in English and Chinese

KANG Qiang^{[a],*}

^[a]Changchun University of Science and Technology, Changchun, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

A brand is shown by a name, a word, a sign, a symbol, a design or a combination of them. It is intended to identify the products or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. For the good brand has the functions of distinguishing, providing information of products and being symbol of credit, the good brand has a good advertisement for the product and help to take in a larger market.

Most brand names in Chinese are in the form of Chinese characters or Pinyin. In the West sense of individuality is very prevailing. What's more, the companies usually belong to individuals, thus the personal names or surnames are used in brand names. On the contrary, Confucianism is the main stream in traditional Chinese culture which underlines hospitality and harmony, and belittles individualism. It is very important to select a brand name in the present-day brand competitive world. Several skills are employed in translating brand names. Among them are transliteration, paraphrase and complementary translation. The translation is deemed a success as long as it can provoke the consumers' good association and their desires for purchasing the products.

Key words: Brand; Names; English; Chinese; Contrastive study

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INTRODUCTION

A brand is shown by a name, a word, a sign, a symbol, a design or a combination of them. It is intended to identify the products or services of one seller or one group of sellers and to differentiate them from their competitors. In other words, the brand is treated as the symbol of the actual product. It is a synthesis of all these elements: physical, aesthetic, rational and emotional and cultural, which is a perception created in the mind of consumers who ascribe beliefs and values to the product. Brands are printed on the surfaces of the products, packages and directions, and hanged in public places. First of all, brand is a mark which is closely concerned with a certain product or service. Brand, being different from Arts, is used as a special mark in the field of the supplying and operating of products or services, second, brand has the character of distinguishing one product or service from another and is different from a sign which shows the quantity and quality of the product or service. Third, brand has a particular feature: it is easy to be read or understood by reading the word, sign, symbol, design or the combination of them.

1. BRAND NAMES AND COMMUNICATIONS

1.1 Roles and Criteria of Brand Names

The names are the main devices of differentiating one brand from another. The greater the quantity and variety of products are, the greater become the demand for brand names. When it comes to naming a new product, it is hard to look at a list of suggested brand names. A brand name conjures up an association with the specific product and

its desirable attributes. The brand name must be appealing and in tune with the consumers' perception of the product. This resulted in the need for manufacturers and marketers to choose a brand name that would be effective in as many ways as possible: memorable, pronounceable, original and directly or indirectly descriptive of the products.

The brand name performs a number of key roles:

- It identifies the product or service, and allows the consumer to specify, reject, or recommend brands.
- It communicates messages to the consumer.
- It functions as a particular piece of legal property in which a manufacturer can sensibly invest and which is protected from competitive attack or trespass.

Brand names are different from trademarks. A brand name is a word, letter, or a group of words or letter. A trademark is a legal term. A trademark includes only those words, symbols, or marks that are legally registered for use by a single company.

The brand name is therefore not only important but also complex. This brings us to the key question, what is the ideal for a brand name. The chief criteria for a good, successful name are these:

- It must be instantly comprehensive visually.
- It must be easily pronounceable in all major languages, especially those of the countries where the product is to be marketed.
- It must not have ludicrous or undesirable meanings in a foreign language.
- The name must have favorable associations.
- The memorability of name is a further criterion.
- Finally, the registered name must meet the necessary legal requirements if it is to be.

1.2 Brand Communications

The word communication derives from the Latin, *communis*, meaning commonness or oneness. Usually there are six primary elements in the communication model. They include context, messages, channels, sender's sources, receivers/decoders, interaction, and feedback interference noise. Communications must be based on substance. They are two ways of communication, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. So is the brand communication.

A brand communication is a sharing of experience between the source or sender of a message and the recipient of that message. For that message it is necessary for the sender to encode the message in a form that the recipient can 'decode' and in a way that achieves mutual understanding of the message (Wincor, Richard, & Irving Mandell, 1980).

Language is the first and foremost means of communication in societies. Knowing the characteristics of spoken and written language will enable the marketer to communicate effectively with consumers. In the face of competition manufacturers defend their corner through the use of brand names. Nowadays brand names and images

are increasingly becoming the spectacles for the global tourists. They can now be found all around the world. This is largely because of global brand communications. World-wide communications may involve several different combinations of promotional activities, including advertising, sponsorship, public relations, packaging, sales promotion and direct marketing.

Consumers are not just passive recipients of marketing activity. They get messages to reinforce prior expectations. The way consumers gain information is shown in Figure 2 firstly from memory, but if insufficient is held, then from external sources.

The receiver must decode the external message and convert the symbols of the received message into the internal message. As Figure 2 shows, information may be stored in memory as a result of an earlier active search process. Alternatively, information may be stored in memory as a result of a passive acquisition process. Repeatedly buying the same brand increases the quantity of suitable information in the memory and limits the need for external search. If there is insufficient information already in a consumer's memory, and if the purchase is thought to warrant it, external search is undertaken. Information is continually bombarding consumers and this information acquisition is a continuous process.

2. APPLICATION OF CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH BRAND NAMES AND CHINESE BRAND NAMES

2.1 Selection of An Effective Brand Name

When the producers select brand names the first thing they must pay attention to is whether the brand name is an internationally available and whether it can be protected. To select a name which should satisfy the company's ambitions for long-term profitable brand growth. Brands must be successful at least in one market basis. It is clear that brands extension beyond national borders must symbolize universal desires or at least have an appeal to a specific segment in a number of geographic regions.

Second, the brand name should be simple. The aim should be to have short names that are easy to read and understand. Usually, long brand names are simplified. For example, Pepsi is for Pepsi Cola. On another hand, initials must try to avoid excessive use, because it takes time for the initials to become associated with brand attributes.

Third, the brand names should be distinctive. Brand names such as Kodak and Adidas create a presence through the distinctive sound of the letters and novelty of the word. This creates attention and the resulting curiosity motivates potential consumers to be more attentive to brand attributes.

Fourth, the brand name should be meaningful. It should consider consumer benefits and facilitate consumers' interpretations of brands. Be sure that whatever brand name is chosen does not give rise to mirth or shock in another language.

Taboo is valuable as an index of the comfort or importance of a topic to a person or a culture. The ancient commandment "Thou shall not take the name of the Lord in vain" is one of our earliest records of taboo. Each culture has its own terms, but it is interesting to note that the taboos are often about the same subjects—religion, sex, death, and bodily functions.

Religion defines the ideals for life, which in turn are reflected in the values and attitudes of societies and individuals. Mecca, the center of pilgrimage of Muslims, is used as a brand name. Though it is short, easily spelt and pronounced, exotic association, it violates the Muslims feelings.

Each culture makes a clear statement concerning good taste, as expressed in the particular symbolism of colors, forms. Black is considered the color of mourning in the United States and Europe, whereas white has the same symbolic meaning in Japan and most of the Far East. Panda is popular in China, but Muslims hate it for it looks like a pig. Bat and dragon are welcomed in China, but both of them are symbolic evil in the West. Lotus is favored in China, but in Japan it is hated for it is a symbol of death. Rabbits are prohibited in Australia. In China rabbits are lovely.

Brand names can also prove problematical. Some brand names are clearly unsuitable for the international scene. For example, Noaa car in Spanish means no go. The Toyota MR2 did not translate happily for the French market, so it is dropped its proposed Silver Mist name in favor of Silver Shadow after it was pointed out that 'mist' translates, in German, to manure.

Fifth, the brand name should be legally protective. Brand names range from distinctive to descriptive. But a descriptive brand name is difficult to be legally protective. Sometimes a proprietary name can gradually become a generic name. The manufactures must try their best to prevent their brand names becoming generic. The famous generic names are nylon, Thermos, Vaseline, Aspirin, Cellophane, Frigidaire, Klaxon, Linguaphone, Bic, Biro, Decca, Jeep, Xerox, elevator. These names are internationally known because the products themselves have been successfully marketed in different countries.

2.2 Translation of Brand Names

2.2.1 Principle for Translating Brand Names

"In Towardo Science of Translating, dynamic equivalence has been treated in terms of the 'closest natural equivalent'" (Chen, 1995). In The Theory and Practice of Translation (Dong & Tang, 1993), Nida says "Dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information. In fact, one of the

most essential, and yet often neglected, elements is the expressive factor, for people must also feel as well as understand what is said" (Gu, 1995).

In the translating of brand names, the translator must take cultural difference into consideration. The translation has the brand name form, short, memorable and easy to pronounce.

2.2.2 Skills in Translating Brand Names

In the translating of brand names, three main skills are widely used. They are transliteration, paraphrase and complementary translation.

Transliteration:

This skill is usually used in translating the proper brand names according to their pronunciations. Sometimes the translation still sounds exotic and associative.

English brand names are translated into Chinese brand names. For example:

Adidas----阿迪达斯	Boeing-----波音
Dupont---杜帮	Cadillac-----凯迪拉克
Contac ---康泰克	Johnson-----庄臣
Gillette ---吉列	Motorola -----摩托罗拉
Fanta -----芬达	Olympus-----奥林巴斯
Sony-----索尼	

According to the pronunciations, some Chinese brand English brand names in the form of Pinyin.

春兰----Chunlan	兰陵----Lanlin
立白----Li Bai	容声----RONGSHENG
春都----ChunDu	长虹----CHANGHONG

Rossini ----罗西尼

names are translated into

大宝----Dabao
榴花----Lihua
华鑫----HuaXin

Paraphrase:

Paraphrase is based on the meaning of the original word. Sometimes the meaning of the source language can be found in the target language, but sometimes there is not exactly the same meaning in the target language. This skill emphasizes on the pragmatic equivalence of the languages in translating brand names.

English brand names are translateu into Chinese brand names:

Apple-----苹果	Camel----骆驼
Crown----皇冠	Good Companion----良友
Blue Bird----蓝鸟	Angel----小大使
PLAY BOY----花花公子	Nescafe ----雀巢咖啡
Duke -----公爵	

Chinese brand names are translated into English brand names:

椰风--- Coconut Hit	雪莲----Snow Lotus
熊猫----Panda	少女之春--- Youth of Lass
双星----Double Star	太阳神-----Apollo
小天鹅---Little Swan	彩虹----Rainbow
肤美灵----Smice	

Complementary translation:

Complementary translation is based on homophone and meaning. Therefore it is not only similar in pronunciation but also in meaning. When Chinese brand names are translated into English, some translations are in the form of English words which sound like Pinyin and meaningful. This skill is the most popular in translating brand names.

Olympus-----奥林巴斯 Sony-----索尼

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E----C:

Coca-Cola---可口可乐 Ador-----雅黛

Avon ----雅芳 Chief ----卓夫

Goldlion ----金利来 Minolta----美能达

Mazda---马自达 Peugeot----标致

Puma----彪马 Safeguard----舒肤佳

Nike---耐克 Poison---百爱神

Emission---爱立信 Pepsi-Cola---百事可乐

Benz---奔驰

C----E:

百乐美---Belmerry 乐凯---Lucky

西汾---Serene 雅戈尔---Youngor

舒蕾---Slek 顺美---Smart

心相印---Heartex 温雅---Youngrace

海信---Hisense

Some translations are special. Not only the pronunciation is quite different from the original one but also the meaning is different. typical examples are飘柔 (rejoice), Kent (健牌), Ball Mall (顺牌)

CONCLUSION

Language is often the first thing that people think about when discussing communication. As languages, English and Chinese are quite different, so are the brand names in English and Chinese. That is why this thesis is the contrastive study of them.

First, names are made of single syllables, or connected syllables. Indeed any given name may represent a wealth of meanings, whether referential, symbolic, associative, or combinations of these. A brand name is a very important piece of information and is often the key piece of information in branding. It must satisfactorily perform a number of quite different roles involving aspects of communication and it also has an important legal role. The derivation of effective brand names is, among other things, an exercise in the skill and art of using language and, within its own context, is all of a piece with literary creativity generally. Both in English and Chinese proper names and common words are used in brand names. Nowadays, coined words are more and more frequently used. Anyway English letters are much more flexible than Chinese characters.

Second, the motivations of brand names are difference. The closer the manufacturer is to understanding the consumers, the way they live, eat and make their choice, the more successful the manufacture will be. Consumers look to brands not only for what can they do, but also to help say something about themselves to their peer groups.

Successful brands blend well with their cultural environment, since consumers decoding of brand values does not break any cultural mores. Some brand names which are appealing to consumers come from images of luxury, or tradition or novelty or even fad.

It is necessary for brand names to be aesthetically motivated. Names, which are easy to pronounce and good to provoke associations both in graph and meaning, are popular.

Third, it is essential that an appropriate brand name be carefully chosen. The wider the geographical coverage the more complex the decision becomes, if for no other reason than the pronunciation of the name. Even if the consumer can pronounce a name, the next question would focus on any other meanings or associations the names might have in different countries.

The length of the name will also be important. The simpler and the shorter the name is, the easier it is to specify. It is easier to remember a product.

Internationally descriptive brand names will be frequently adopted in the foreseeable future. And international brands need to appeal to consumers with a wide range of cultural, religious, language and ethnic backgrounds. We should be keenly aware of national differences and should develop our brands and take these into account from the outset.

Forth, special attention must be paid to the translating of brand names. What may seem to be a good name for a product in English may be a totally unacceptable name in another language. It is the same case in Chinese. In the translating of brand names there are several useful skills we can choose according to certain circumstances.

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