Brand Name Translation as a Decisive Factor in Positioning Foreign Brands On Chinese Market (II)*

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Determining the brand name is always a crucial aspect in the development of a brand's image and its correct positioning in the consumers' mind. As the ideal name for a brand is always demanding to find, it becomes even harder to translate its original form in order to synchronize it to the culture and personality of the consumers of new, international market. It is even a more labyrinthine process to transfer a brand name from a phonographic language system to a logographic-based language system, such as Chinese, as Chinese writing is fundamentally different from other writing systems, in the way that it allows the interpretation of a word only at the broad level of the grapheme.

The purpose of this study is to examine and discuss the relation between translation approaches, cultural peculiarities and brand personality. In order to do this, 20 international brands from five different categories were chosen through a focus group and analysed in order to show how and why Chinese consumers choose to adopt (or not) different foreign brands.

Keywords: brand image, brand personality, Chinese logographic system, cultural translation, phono-semantic translation

I. Brand And Brand Personality

"The most distinctive skill of professional marketers is probably their ability to create, maintain, develop and protect brands." (Kotler, P., Keller, L. K, 2008). But what is a brand? According to the American Marketing Association, **a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of these elements, having the purpose of identifying the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiating these goods or services by those of the competitors"** (via ama.org). Due to the unique features of the brand,



consumers can evaluate differently two almost identical products belonging to different producers. By brand, the manufacturer or service provider induces quality standards, moral standards, and intangible qualities to the goods. **Through the name, the brand receives a meaning within the society**, further than the actual sounds that compose it. That is why marketers should analyse carefully the message they would be sharing to a community through a translated brand name - "A carefully created and chosen name can bring inherent and immediate value to the brand" (Chan B.Y., 2017).

Although goods marketed under different brand names are nothing more than products or services, **consumers often tend to personify the brand** image of goods, humanizing the brand, creating a whole concept of personality through which they define it. Thus, certain **brands** come to be associated **with life styles, be characterized by attributes describing virtues or defects**.

Aaker describes the **brand's capital** through four dimensions: brand seen as a **product**, brand as an **organization**, brand as a **person** (brand personality), and brand seen as a **symbol (**Kotler, P., Keller, L. K. 2008). An interesting perspective that highlights a bridge between the brand and the consumer's environment is that of the brand as a person or the brand personality. **Brand personality** can be defined as **"that set of features that individuals assign to a product or service as if they were individuals"** (Schiffman, L.G., Kanuk, L.L, 2012). This set of features can appear either in a symbolic or utilitarian form depending on the needs they satisfy.

Strong brands allow people to obtain what they desire, further than satisfying primary needs. **Brands increase confidence, confer social status, belonging to the group**, instilling the consumer to overcome the level of utilitarian consumption and turn it into hedonic consumption. In case of **Chinese consumers**, it is not seldom that **premium brands are selected in order for social status to be obtained.**

Peter Fisk identifies four types of brands in terms of the benefits they offer:

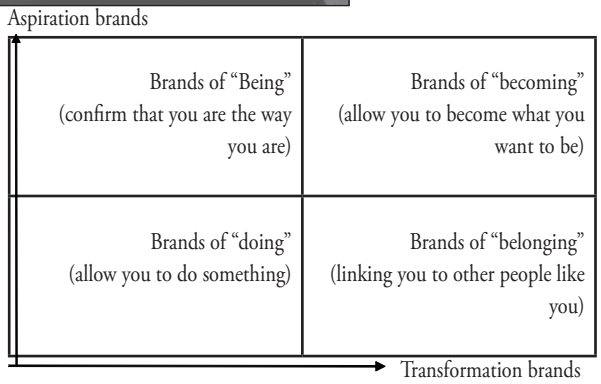


Figure 4: Types of brands (Fisk, P., 2008)

If we are to look at Fisk's matrix and find a place for the Chinese consumption and brand choosing pattern, we would conclude that the brands of "becoming" will be those preferred by Chinese people, allowing them to become their ideal self.

Jennifer Aaker (Aaker, J.L., 1997) performed research in the field of brand personality and, based on the human traits that different respondents attributed to the studied brands, developed the "Brand Personality Scale" model which allows to characterize and compare different brands by applying the same standardized attributes to them. The model contains five main traits that a brand can be characterized through, each of them being detailed through more attributes:

- Sincerity (with sense of reality, honesty, decency, good mood)
- Exciting character (boldness, vivacity, imaginative, topicality)
- Competence (seriousness, intelligence, success)
- Refinement (elite, charming personality)
- Robustness (passion for outdoor activities, resistance)

Further research studies performed in the Chinese market proved that the "Robustness" trait is not present in the brand personality evaluate by Chinese people, others added the "Traditionalism", "Joyfulness" and "Trendiness" when it comes to constructing a personality model for the Chines market (Shu-Chuan C., Yongjun S., 2011). This result is mostly due to the

different cultural structure of Chinese people compared to the American ones (Wendian, S., Yanhong, L., Liheng, Y., 2012). Besides, research proved that based on the personality trait theory, Chinese people find international brands as having a preferred personality compared to local brands, thus the openness to international products (Huang, Y., Wang, B., Gong, Q., Wang H., Yu C., Zhao P., 2005).

1.1. Brand Personality Meeting Consumer's Personality

The brand categorization of Fisk correlates with the theories connecting brand image and personality with the personality of the consumer and the desires that lay at the foundation of the purchase. This concept of relational marketing was studied by Blackston (1993,1995), and Fournier (1998) and relates to the concept of the self-image congruence established by Dolich in 1969 and further developed by Martin and Bellizi (1982). This concept states that at the foundation of choice we will find the desire of the consumer for brand with a personality that cognitively fits with the ideal individual image, therefore the product or service becoming a mean for the consumer to obtain a desired state (Azevedo, A., Pessoa, F., 2005).

The study of the brand personality and its conversion according to the personality of the target groups brings a major advantage to marketers. However, both human personality and brand personality can be influenced by various factors. First of all, the self-perception of an individual can be approached from several perspectives. Thus, one can speak of the "real self-image", defined by the way individuals perceive themselves, the "ideal image of themselves" (the way consumers perceive it should be), "the social image of oneself" shaped by the way consumers think they are perceived by others, and the "ideal social image of the self", the way consumers want to be perceived (Schiffman, L.G., Kanuk, L.L, 2012). Therefore, the personality of the target group becomes insufficient without knowing the segment of the self-image that individuals want to develop. By knowing these aspects, marketers will be able to target products and services to specific target groups according to the extent to which they are able to develop the four facets of the self- image.

Whether we are talking about professional or personal development, man tends to focus on independence in making decisions, seeking to always master the situation. However, the independence of each individual is relative, we can call it pseudo-independence, and man is constantly influenced by various factors of an exogenous nature in his behaviour. Being either in the form of people or groups of influence, or in the form of socially generated customs, the consumer is influenced during the purchasing process by, personal, cultural and social factors.

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to analyse the methods used by global brands to translate their brand name for the Chinese market and also the marketing implications of these translations, we firstly proceeded to the selection of brands. We decided to choose four categories of products/services, namely (1) food & drinks, (2) industry activity, (3) children care and entertainment and (4) personal care.

Each 5 brands within these categories were carefully chosen through a focus group organized by the authors with five Chinese natives who also speak English fluently. The reason for choosing these persons was that their English speaking abilities, they were able to understand both the original meaning of the brand name and the Chinese translated version. After the respondents were selected, they were asked to nominate several brands that they consider as having an interesting and suitable Chinese translation. Their Chinese cultural background allowed them to nominate the selected brands, based on the meanings and perceptions generated in the Chinese market.

The translation of the 20 selected brands from the original name to the Chinese name was analysed from a linguistic, cultural and marketing point of view, by closely observing the chosen techniques and the potential impact on the Chinese market.

III. EVALUATIONS OF FOREIGN BRANDS TRANSLATION IN CHINESE

1. Food & Drinks

a. Coca-cola 可口可乐Kěkǒu kělè

The American drink was introduced to China in 1927. At first, it was translated as 蝌蝌啃蜡Kē kē kěn là, which represented a big failure due to the lack of both semantic and cultural approach to translation, as a purely phonetic transfer was used, without taking into account the meaning of the chosen words; the characters 蝌蝌Kē kē mean tadpole, the character 啃 kěn means to gnaw, to chew persistently and loudly and 蜡là means wax. So the translation蝌蝌啃蜡Kē kē kěn là basically, suggests an animal gnawing wax, which of course cannot trigger a positive and tempting reaction. Due to this ignorance in translation, at that time Chinese people though the drink was destined to be consumed by animals, because of its brand name and colour. Later on, Chiang Yee (1903-1977), a Chinese poet, author, painter, and calligrapher changed the name into 可口可乐Kěkǒu kělè; 可口 Kěkǒu means delicious, savoury, and 可乐kělè means happy, so the entire name suggested that the drink

is delicious and it will make people happy. However, the company officials claim that the closest Mandarin equivalent to Coca-Cola was "Kou Ke Kou Le", but the ingenuity and talent of the translator lays in the fact that, if transliterated literally, the name should be Kǒu Kě instead of Kě Kǒu, where口渴 (kǒu kě) means thirsty, but by switching口渴 (kǒu kě), to可口Kě Kǒu, the meaning went from thirsty to tasty. It is widely acknowledged that the Chinese version of the name is much better than even the original name. Besides the very interesting and provocative meaning, the pronunciation of 可口可乐Kěkǒu kělè is very similar to the original name, this translation being one of the greatest examples of close attention to phonologic, semantic and cultural peculiarities of the translation.

b. Hershey's 好时Hǎo shí

The American chocolate brand, founded by and named after Milton Hershey, was also found to have a good Chinese translation, as好时Hǎo shí, which means good or enjoyable time, induces consumers the idea that they will have a good time while eating Hershey's. 好时Hǎo shí is a phono-semantic translation with added meaning in terms of the benefits of the products through the significance of both constituent characters, as the pronunciation of -shey is similar to 时shí, and the pinyin of 好(Hǎo) shares the same initial letter with Hershey's, which counts as an alliteration.

c. Double mint 绿箭Lǜ jiàn

绿箭Lǜ jiàn is an example of translation done through the semantic calque method. As both the external packaging and the English noun "mint" are green绿Lǜ, which means green, was chosen as the first word in the name. 箭jiàn means arrow, the speed of arrow is very high, so it means that you will feel refreshed very quickly after you take a Double Mint chewing gum.

d. Subway 赛百味Sài bǎiwèi

The translation of this brand name followed both the phonetic and semantic method, as the pronunciation of 赛百味Sài bǎiwèi is quite similar to [suhb-wey]. 赛Sài, which means to surpass was chosen for phonetic reasons but also for semantic ones, as it triggers the idea that this brand surpassed the other similar ones, likewise百味bǎiwèi follows both the phonetic transliteration of the original and it also has a semantic value which shows the benefits of the product, as it means a hundreds of flavours. So 赛百味 means that the brand surpasses any other similar one, as it offers hundreds of flavours to its customers.

e. McDonald's 麦当劳Màidāngláo

The Chinese name of the well-known American brand was translated purely from the phonetic point of view, as Màidāngláo has a very similar pronunciation to the original and also very pleasant to hear. However, on Oct. 25, 2017, Chinese media reported the change of China's McDonald's brand name from what the Chinese have earnestly known for 27 years as麦当劳 Màidāngláo to金拱门Jīn gǒngmén, which is a not even a semantic translation, having nothing to do with the phonetic structure of the original, nor with the type or meaning of the brans. Its characters translate as: Jīn 金- gold and gǒngmén拱门 – arched door, thus, the new name makes an analogy with the description of the logo of the brand, but it literary has no connection with the category, the phonology or the benefits of the brand. Nowadays, the Chinese social media is having a huge debate on this issue, as basically no one can understand the reason behind this change.

2. Industry Activity

a. Mercedes-Benz 奔驰Bēnchí

The translation of this brand was done through a phono-semantic approach as the pronunciation of 奔Bēn is quite similar to Benz. 奔驰Bēnchí means to gallop or run quickly, so it reinforces the product type and strengthens the product's characteristic and benefits to customers, prompting the idea of speed and race.

b. BMW 宝马Bǎomǎ

宝马Bǎomǎ is a result of explanatory translation, being a partial-calque, in which the pinyin of 宝（Bǎo）shares the same initial letter with BMW and it also means precious, 马mǎ means horse, the type of transportation vehicle in ancient China, which explains the category of the brand.

c. Porsche 保时捷Bǎoshíjié

Another example of good phono-semantic translation is保时捷Bǎoshíjié which has a similar pronunciation with [pɔːʃ.ə], besides保Bǎo means to guarantee, 时shí means time and 捷jié means quick. Thus, the entire name, reveals the benefit of owning this type of car, which is fast and it can ensure the owner to arrive to the destination very quickly and on time.

d. Carrefour 家乐福Jiālèfú

Following the same logic of phono-semantic translation, 家乐福Jiālèfú has a similar pronunciations to the original name and besides, in terms of semantics and cultural meanings, it targets exactly the personality and culture of Chinese people, as 家Jiā means home, which indicates the functions of the brand—to sell products for daily use; 乐lè means happy and 福fú means blessings, which are very well chosen words for Chinese culture, suggesting that customers of Jiālèfú can have a happy, blessed family.

e. Ikea 宜家Yíjiā

Ikea used also the phono-semantic methodology, as Yí jiā has a similar pronunciation to the original, and in terms of semantics, it was very wisely chosen; 宜家Yí jiā means something that is good for home or something that is suitable for home, suggesting that the products of the company are good for making your

home a better and comfortable place. Besides, 宜家 Yí jiā is part of a famous Chinese poem, from诗经 (Book of Odes): 之子于归，宜家宜室 ("This young lady is going to her future home, and will order well her chamber and house."), which is a good method of stimulating the Chinese to remember the brand name.

3. Children Care and Entertainment

a. Lego 乐高Lègāo

Another example of exquisite translation, Lègāo is a phonologic transliteration whose pronunciation is very similar to the original, and on the top of everything, the meaning of the two chosen characters is that the children playing with Lego will benefit of a lot of happiness: 乐Lè means happy and高gāo means high, so it means the degree of happiness is very high.

b. Pampers 帮宝适Bāng bǎo shì

The Chinese version of Pampers paid attention both to the phonetic transliteration but mainly to the explanation of the meaning of the word, as帮 means help, 宝means baby (so it depicts the fact that the brand is designed for babies) and 适shì means comfortable, so it indicates the benefits of the brand.

c. Johnson & Johnson 强生Qiángshēng

While the phonetic attribute of the translation is not quite similar, 强生Qiáng means strong and 生 shēng means to give birth, to grow. The explanatory translation meant to suggest that the brand will help the consumer grow their children healthy and strong.

d. Disney 迪士尼Díshìní

迪士尼Díshìní received a phonetic translation, which selected the linguistic symbols in Chinese that are pronounced very similarly to the English version and which also correspond to the phonetic structure of the original. The semantic structure of the original was not taken into consideration at all, as the composing characters 迪Dí (enlighten), 士shì (soldier) and 尼ní (a morpheme often used in phonetic spellings) have no connection to the characteristics of the brand.

e. Infantino 婴蒂诺Yīng dì nuò

The American toys and baby care brand is one of the most popular brand of its type in China at the moment. The Chinese version 婴蒂诺Yīng dì nuò was translated through phono-semantic method, as "dì" has a similar pronunciation with "ti" and "nuò" with "no"; moreover the composing Chinese words were very well selected, as they show the category of the brand (婴 Yīng means baby, infant) and also an advantage of the brand, that assures the parents of their most sincere intentions as 诺nuò means to promise – thus they promise to parents and infants alike that their brand "puts safety first and use harm-free materials in all of the products" (infantino.com) as the officials declare on their website.

4. Personal Care

a. Dove 德芙Dé fú

德芙Dé fú is translated entirely through phonologic method, as 德Dé means Germany or virtue, morals and芙fú is a meaningless bound form, both characters have no connection with the origin of the brand (UK) or with the benefits and characteristics of the brand. However, the pronunciation of 德芙Dé fú is quite similar to [duhv]. A more inspired translation could have been, 得福Dé fú, which has entirely the same pronunciation, but has a more interesting meaning, i.e. blessing or good fortune, which, through good advertisement could have been connected to the benefits of the brand.

b. Head & shoulders 海飞丝Hǎifēisī

The semantic translation of海飞丝Hǎifēisī intends to imprint the image of a silky, healthy hair flowing in the sea breeze. 海 (Hǎi) means sea, 飞fēi means to fly, 丝sī means silk, and 飞丝means smooth, soft and lustrous hair.

c. Clear 清扬Qīng yáng

The shampoo brand Clear chose again to use the semantic translation, where 清Qīng means clean, 扬 yáng means to raise, to throw up and scatter. Clear is famous for its effect of wiping away dandruff, so the Chinese name also tries so explicitly show this benefit, making 清扬Qīng yang to suggest that the hair will no longer have dandruff, becoming smooth and lustrous.

d. Safeguard 舒肤佳Shū fūjiā

The skin and hair cleaning products of Safeguard brand was calqued through explanatory translation, as 舒肤Shū fū means to make skin comfortable and 佳 jiā means good. The translated name means that such kind of products are good and comfortable for skin.

e. Tide 汰渍Tài zì

A phono-semantic translation which explains though the chosen words that the benefit of this product is to eliminate dirt: 汰Tài means eliminate, 渍 zì means dirt.

Aside from the linguistic and cultural evaluation, an evaluation from the perspective of marketing studies shows that that both culture and the personality – brand personality concept were applied in order to receive the desired results. By following Peter Fisk's categorization of brands, most of the translations place the analysed brands within "brands of becoming": Coca-Cola facilitates happiness, a desired state of being, Hershey's offers an enjoyable time, Carrefour blesses your home and makes the consumer happy through the products it offers, Ikea transforms a house into a home, Lego guarantees high degree of happiness, Head & Shoulders creates an ideal image of a soft, silky hair flying in the sea breeze and Safeguard makes skin comfortable. In other words, all these translations provide a clear view of the benefits of the products, underlying their hedonic value, helping the company



Sursă foto: http://culturaeko.com/arthur-lovejoy-pionero-la-historia-las-ideas-siglo-xx/

in their positioning strategy.

Based on the translation method, a series of products can be included in the category of "brands of doing", helping the consumer to perform a desired action: Mercedes Benz provides the Chinese consumer with a fast ride option, Porsche guarantees a quick, timely ride, Johnson & Johnson helps parents grow their babies strong, Pampers offers help in creating comfort for kids, Double Mint offers a strong fresh sensation with the speed of an arrow, Tide clearly eliminates dirt.

Besides the semantic translation approach, we also have a series of brands that received a phonetic translation – Disney and Dove showing the desire of the marketers not to dilute the international brand identity and foreignness. This comes as an interesting aspect in relation with the openness of Chinese people to international brands and aspects of novelty, created by their collectivist culture with allocentric features and low dogmatism personality. Subway, translated as hundreds of flavours, also supports the idea that Chinese people, being low-dogmatic, are open-minded when it comes to novelty aspects, in this case –hundreds of flavours that might be unknown.

An interesting choice was found for the translation of McDonald's brand, where the phonetic translation was recently changed with one picturing the logo of the brand – the golden arch. We consider this choice as one aiming to internationalize the perception of the Chinese consumer who until now was used to a phonetically similar name, by forcing a direct association of the Chinese name to the internationally well-known golden arched.

In terms of the relation between the consumer's and brand's personality, we consider that the first category – brands of becoming – shows matching relation between the person and the brand through the desire of honour, social position and dignity personality traits of the Chinese consumers (in direct relationship with the collective feature) and the congruent brand personality induced through translation. Besides, the low dogmatism personality trait is used in matching the openness to novelty with the international names of the phonetically translated brand name.

IV. Conclusion

Through the present research the strong impact of interdisciplinary research was once again underlined, as it proved highly efficient in the comprehensive analyse of the methods, reasons behind decisions, the reception and impact of the name of a brand on its reputation and position on the international market. If we are to look at culture alone, the two sides that define it – tangible (product) and intangible (language) show the multidimensional approach that the translation methods used for international brands in Chinese language needs to be taken into account. Consumer behaviour – itself an interdisciplinary field – meets within this study with the study of linguistics, managing to explain the impact of the name of a foreign brand in China by applying the concepts of culture, brand personality and translation techniques, answering questions about why and how Chinese consumers adopt different international brands.

Through the analyse of the 20 brand names, it was noticed that generally the Chinese version of the brand name was much more inspiring and interesting, with a closer relationship to the category, specificity or benefits of the brand; we judge this as a benefit Chinese writing system – the embodiment of a special mode of perception of the world, a symbiosis of synthetic and integrated knowledge which assures an incredible connection with the cultural believes and values. The findings suggest that for a successful translation, a close attention must be given to both phonologic and semantic features and also to cultural peculiarities of the brand name. Besides, the translator needs to

recognize the behavioural and personality traits of the target consumer, as to fulfil their needs and preferences.

At this point, the questions raised while working on this study helped us formulate new research paths as some of the concepts still need streamlining and extending. The current study represents the first important step in the interdisciplinary research of the relation between consumer behaviour and cultural and linguistic specificities of Chinese, contributing to a future, complex research plan in this direction.

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