

# ***Cross-border E-commerce Trademark Translation Guided by Skopos Theory***

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**Abstract:** Under the influence of economic globalization, the world's commodity trade is becoming more and more frequent, and the competition between the same type of products is becoming more intense in the process of broadening the international market. Therefore, trademark translation is more important for the cultural fit of the corresponding consumer countries. From the perspective of translation purpose theory, this paper studies the translation of some cross-border e-commerce commodity trademarks, analyzes the problems existing in the translation of cross-border e-commerce commodity trademarks, and puts forward countermeasures to improve the translation of trademarks.

## **1. Introduction**

With the deepening of the internationalization of enterprises, the importance of international communication of enterprise commodity brands has become increasingly prominent. Trademark is an important way for commodity producers and sellers to transmit product information, publicize products and promote sales, and is the carrier of the external image of commodity brands. Trademark translation refers to the translation of the source language of a trademark into the target language. Since the translated name of a trademark is equivalent to a trademark, a good trademark plays an important role in marketing. Especially in the current international market, the study of trademark translation shows a sense of necessity and urgency, which has become a hot issue of practical significance.

## **2. Skopos Theory and Product Titles**

### **2.1 An overview of skopos theory in translation**

The rise of skopos theory in translation can be traced back to Germany in the 1970s. Hans Vermeer, a well-known scholar in that country, published the Framework for a *General Translation Theory* in 1978, which first mentioned skopos theory. Later, in 1984, *Grundlegung Einer Allgemeinen Translationstheorie*, Reiss and Vermeer, jointly completed with Katharine Reiss, gave a more detailed explanation and formally put forward Skopos Theory. The word "Skopos"

comes from Greek and means "purpose, goal". In Vermeer's view, language can not only be regarded as a simple conversion between different languages, but rather integrate a certain language and related language symbols into another language activity, which can also express expected ideas or achieve corresponding functions in the context of another language. <sup>[1]</sup>Translation, as a unique way of human behavior, has a clear purpose. Its main purpose is that people in different languages and cultures can form mutual understanding in this process. Translation is a purposeful communication activity, and the purpose of translation guides the implementation of translation tasks. In other words, the translation depends on the purpose of translation. The three principles of skopos theory put forward by Vermeer also provide basic criteria for evaluating the quality of translation, namely skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule.

### **2.1.1 Skopos rule**

The skopos principle, as the primary principle to be followed by the translator, dominates among the three principles.<sup>[2]</sup> The other two principles must not violate the main idea of the skopos principle. In the process of translation, the method adopted by the translator is determined by its translation purpose, that is, "the result proves that the method is justified". Generally speaking, translation purpose refers to the purpose of the translation at the communicative level, that is, "the communicative function of the translation to the target language's readers in the social background, culture and context of the target language". Before the start of translation, the translator needs to clarify the main idea of the translation and implement the corresponding translation strategy without deviating from the target and expected results.

### **2.1.2 Coherence rule**

The principle of coherence, also known as the principle of consistency, holds that the translation must follow the intra-textual coherence, that is, the relationship between the target text and the target language culture, and the acceptability and readability of the translation should make the audience clear and meaningful in the target language culture and the context in which the translation is used, that is, to ensure that the recipient of the translation understands, It has communicative function in the language and culture environment in which the receiver is located, and has expected significance.

### **2.1.3 Fidelity rule**

It can also be called the loyalty principle, that is, the interlingual consistency and coherence between the source text and the target text should be maintained. The target text should be understood by the recipient while being loyal to the source text, but the purpose of the source text and the degree of understanding of the recipient will determine the fidelity of the translation and the related forms. Under the guidance of the principle of loyalty, the translator clearly recognizes the cultural differences in the translation process and the connection between the translator and the target readers. The translator bears certain responsibilities in the process of translation, so he has the obligation to explain the translation behavior adopted in the process of translation.

## **2.2 Product Title Overview**

The World Intellectual Property Organization defines a trademark as a mark used to distinguish the goods of an industrial or commercial enterprise or such an enterprise group. According to the golden rule of advertising design and AIDA principle summarized by international marketing expert Heinz M. Goldman, a successful trademark should have the following four points: Attention,

Interest, Desire and Action. Therefore, a good trademark translation must be clear, clear, easy to remember.

### **3. Problems in trademark translation**

There are many problems in the translation of cross-border e-commerce product titles. For example, some titles are translated directly according to Chinese expressions; Some titles are directly applied to the titles of other similar products without modification; Some titles rely too much on the translation of translation software and do not carry out post-editing work such as manual modification and polishing. The misuse or mistranslation of product titles may lead to a series of problems, such as violation of platform regulations, infringement of trademark patent rights, and neglect of the cultural habits of target groups, which may affect the sales of products. On the cross-border e-commerce platform, the product title is its best salesman. Therefore, the product title should accurately reflect the product characteristics to attract customers' attention.

#### **3.1 Trademark translation is complicated and lengthy**

According to the purpose principle of teleology, appropriate product titles are set up in order to attract consumers' attention and make them interested in reading, so as to improve the exposure of products. However, the title of some products is too long and complex, and consumers are likely not willing to continue to read the product details page.

Take the title translation of clothing products as an example, such as "Europe and the United States Women's new high-end boutique 2022 spring new major suit dress and a generation of fat", which is directly translated by web translation software into: Europe and the United States Women's new high-end boutique 2022 spring new major suit dress skirt and a generation of fat. In such an English title, it is long and can't catch the point. Except for the words "dress" and "spirit", other parts are meaningless.

#### **3.2 Can't reflect the brand connotation**

Due to the significant differences between English and Chinese, different translation methods should be used to treat different trademarks. When translating trademarks, the cultural connotation of the source language and the cultural differences of different languages should be retained to make the translation conform to the cultural awareness of the target language readers.

Gap is an American affordable fashion brand. As one of the largest clothing groups in the United States, Gap's business scope is very wide, including men's wear, women's wear, baby wear, etc., which is very appropriate to the meaning of "Gap" itself. In China, consumers know the Gap brand, but have never heard of its Chinese name. It can be seen that the translation of this brand has failed.

#### **3.3 Inadequate attention to cultural differences**

Translation is not only the translation of language, but also the translation of culture. Language is a part of culture. Translation is "a cross-cultural communication activity with cross-cultural and communicative nature". Therefore, the translation of trademarks should not only convey the cultural connotation of the goods, but also take into account the psychological acceptance of potential users and solve the two problems of language and culture.

On the cross-border e-commerce platform, the expression of commodity titles should be strict and conform to the expression habits of the target language. This requires translators to fully grasp the cultural similarities and differences between Chinese and Western languages, understand the

habits, behaviors and expressions of Chinese and Western countries, understand the economic, political and cultural historical background of Chinese and Western countries, as well as the differences in cross-cultural communication, and on this basis, translate a translation that meets the needs of local language expressions and consumer groups. Only in this way can the product name attract the attention of consumers and win their attention and favor.

For example, on the cross-border e-commerce platform, taking the sites of America and Britain for example, some translators translated "potato chips" into "Crisps" on the US site, and "Chips" on the UK site. Crisps is British English, while Chips is American English. Obviously, translators did not take cultural and linguistic differences into account when translating.

## **4. Trademark translation strategies from the perspective of skopos theory**

### **4.1 Ensure the accuracy of translation**

The most important principle in the skopos theory of translation is the skopos principle. The main purpose of product title translation is to enable target customers to accurately and quickly accept product information through title translation, so as to attract their attention and purchase. To achieve this goal, the translation of product titles must be accurate. The translator must express the product information comprehensively and accurately through concise language, proper writing and correct writing. If the product is translated incorrectly, it will greatly affect sales. For example, when a cross-border platform translates the Dark Souls game into "Dark Seoul", it is immediately unattractive.

### **4.2 Optimize core keywords**

In the cross-border e-commerce platform, the product name is the most intuitive and important display content. Key words are the central words that best represent the attributes of goods. The customer's record of traffic information is limited, which means that if the merchant can reasonably grasp the key words of the product, his product is likely to be seen by more customers and leave a deep impression on them. Therefore, when translating commodity titles, the translator should choose to use more commonly used, concise and clear keywords with higher search frequency. The use of more commonly used and concise words that consumers are more familiar with is more likely to arouse their interest in exploration. For example, we prefer to use blouse rather than women's shirt.

### **4.3 Attach importance to brand translation**

Commodity brand is the advertising language of commodities, bearing rich cultural connotation. If a product is to be promoted in another cultural context and accepted by the target consumer group in that country, its brand translation needs to conform to the language expression habits and cultural expression methods of the target country. Under the guidance of skopos theory, commodity brands can be translated by transliteration, free translation, and combination of sound and meaning.<sup>[3]</sup>

Transliteration should be considered in the translation of most commodity trademarks, and the corresponding Chinese translation should be obtained according to the English pronunciation of the translated name and the local pronunciation habits. This method can not only retain the meaning of the target language, but also integrate with the local culture to a certain extent, deepen consumers' awareness and impression of the product, so that the product can successfully enter the country's market. For example: KONKA, Hisense. The translations of these brands are short and easy to remember, and can quickly gain the recognition of consumers.

Secondly, we should consider free translation, increase our own opinions on the basis of understanding the original text, or adopt different forms of expression from the original text in order to better integrate the target text with the cultural environment of the recipient. Such as Fragrant Grass, if it is translated into Fangcao, it will cause misunderstanding or disgust, because in English, the meaning of Fang is the fangs of snakes, and the pronunciation of cao is similar to chaos in English, so Fangcao is easily misunderstood as "chaos of fangs". Originally, Fangcao brand was a toothpaste brand with high reputation in the domestic market, but in the eyes of foreigners, due to improper translation, it has become "chaotic fangs" (or "chaos of fangs"), which is not conducive to product sales.

For some trademarks formed by the combination of common nouns and proper nouns, the translation method of combination of sound and meaning, that is, half transliteration and half free translation, can not only reflect the characteristics of the origin of trademarks, but also fully reflect the connotation of trademarks and the characteristics of goods. For example, Warrior has both the meaning of "warrior" and the pronunciation of "huili". The translation method of combining sound and meaning retains the characteristics of the original text and highlights the charm of the target language and culture.

#### 4.4 Focus on cross-cultural differences

Skopos theory of translation holds that translation is not only the translation of language, but also the translation of culture. However, each country has its own different customs, habits, taboos, etc. To some extent, trademarks are highly concentrated or refined from the culture of the source language. If we do not pay attention to the cultural differences between the two languages when translating trademarks, and use the cultural thinking of the source language to speculate the acceptance of the culture of the translated language to the translation, it will inevitably cause cultural conflicts. The result is that the readers of the translated language cannot or cannot accept the translation, and the purpose of trademark translation cannot be achieved.

The translation of product names should not only convey the important information of the product, but also conform to the local language expression and habits. Only in this way can we provide consumers with better consumption experience and win more customers. While transmitting information, translators should follow the principles of skopos theory, learn to use the methods of skopos theory and their own innovative thinking, so as to translate the most local information. In sales, sellers should fully understand the language and culture of each website and avoid cultural taboos of different countries in order to better attract customers and increase sales.

#### 5. Conclusion

Skopos theory of translation makes up for the shortcomings of traditional translation studies to a certain extent, and provides a new perspective for translation studies, especially for the study of translation criteria. Trademark is a commodity advertisement in another sense. Trademark translation has a clear purpose, that is, to let the audience know and accept it and achieve the goal of successful marketing. Therefore, under the guidance of skopos theory, it is of great significance to improve the translation of trademarks with low acceptance on the basis of following the principles of skopos, coherence and faithfulness, so that it can win more market share in non-local markets, bring more considerable commercial value, and enhance its competitiveness in the international market.

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