

A Study on the Foreign Publicity Translation of China's Time-Honored Brands in Sichuan from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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Abstract: China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan have been inherited and officially certified through time, standing as one of the symbols of the traditional cultures of the Chinese nation with local features. Promoting China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan to market abroad not only helps to broaden the international reputation of Sichuan enterprises, but also to introduce the traditional cultures behind, adding an effort to mutual understanding between China and the world. Considering improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the external publicity translation of China's Time-honored Brands, the theory of Eco-translatology is adopted in this study which features three dimensions—linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension, so as to provide a different and comprehensive perspective for the outreach of Time-honored Brands. Combined with actual case analysis, it is hoped that this study will offer some help and reference for the external publicity translation of commercial brands and acceleration of globalization and cultural mutual understanding.

Keywords: China's Time-honored Brands; Eco-translatology; foreign publicity translation

1. Introduction

According to statistics, the number of China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan, certificated by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, is 48, involving a variety of industries such as food, herbs, brewing and spices. Longchao shou (or Dragon Wonton), Chenmapo Tofu, Luzhou Laojiao, Spousal Lung Slices, Deren Tang, Lai Tangyuan, have become household names nationwide. Among them, Chenmapo Tofu and Spousal Lung Slices have already been widely popularized overseas. The reason why these brands stand out from the crowd of enterprises, without exception, have undergone the sedimentation of history and the test of time. All brands shall be founded in 1956 and before, with a good reputation after nearly a century of history, with excellent product quality and fine craftsmanship, widely recognized and praised by the people. These brands have their own unique heritage products, skills or services, carrying the excellent traditional corporate culture of Sichuan or traditional familial succession, with historical value, and full of cultural connotations.

However, many traditional brands are struggling with their own decline[1]. With the development of economy and the rise of new commerce in multi-forms, these time-honored brands are faced with the pressure from the new-born brands and the challenge of exploring the foreign market so as to elevate their market shares worldwide and search for commercial possibilities. As a consequence, it is paramount to analyze the current situation and challenges of these brands to promote their foreign publicity strategy. Applying the Theory of Eco-translatology into this study, is in the hope of finding the transformation direction for the Chinese time-honored brands.

2. Research Theory: Eco-translatology

2.1 Brief review

Eco-translatology is originally proposed and developed by the famous Chinese scholar Prof. Hu Gengshen, milestone by the publication of his book *An Approach to Translation as Adaption and Selection*. In the ecology system of nature, ecological environments are mutually influenced, interconnected with each other, thus inseparable to the whole. Applying these ecological principles of

nature to translation constitutes the interdisciplinary theory of Eco-translatology, studying the connections and transformations between human translation activities, target texts, source texts, social culture and even natural ecology. Hu states that translational eco-environment refers to the situation and condition presented by the source language, source text, target language, target reader, and the social environment of the translator's time, etc[2]. As a newly emerging research theory in the study of translation field, it attaches importance to the leading role of translators and the principle of multi-dimensional transformation, namely the language dimension, the culture dimension, and the communication dimension and so on[3]. With all of these elements interrelated together, an eco-environment is formed where as long as translators do the correct selections and adaptations, the effectiveness of translation would be achieved.

Inspired by the Chinese ancient ecological wisdom: "The beginning of Chinese culture focuses on life"[4], this theory features many ancient Chinese philosophy, such as "Nature and human as One", emphasizing the harmony, objectivity, co-existence and sustainability between man and the environment, as well as the relevance of collective and individual efforts. Invoked by Darwin's Theory of Survival of the Fittest, "selection" and "adaptation" are the cores.

In this theory, there are three layers determining the success of the translation. Firstly, the ecosystem, the source text, the text type and the client's choice of translator are the factors that together influence the choice of a translation; Secondly, once selected, the translator can select and adapt the source text to the ecological environment, otherwise the translator will also be eliminated. Finally, translators, on the other hand, need to recycle the inherent ecological structure of the original text in the translation process and reproduce it in another language.

2.2 Main research focus

As taking "ecology" as its perspective of argumentation, it provides a comprehensive and holistic study on translation, involving nine main research focuses, namely, the ecological paradigm, the chain of associated sequences, ecological rationality, translation, Eco-translation environment, translator as the center, adaptive selection, "three-dimension" transformation, and post-incident accountability.

In the context of foreign publicity discussion, "three-dimension" transformation approach is normally preferred to be applied to. Three-dimensional transformation refers to the transformation between the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. For the linguistic dimension, the key is the ecological analysis of the source and the target language of the text; for the cultural dimension, focus on cross-cultural differences between the source language and the target language as well as cross-cultural study of the translation ecosystem; for the communicative dimension, translation is a kind of practical activity for human beings, therefore, the role of translation science and human communication interaction should be focused. In the end, such translation could reach the outcome of winning the attention of consumers and gradually helping brands take the market share. To make a successful study of the foreign publicity translation of Time-honored Brands in Sichuan under the theory of Eco-translatology, it is crucial to analyze the current situation of these brands and reasons behind in below.

3. Current Situation of Sichuan China's Time-honored Brands

3.1 Current situation

At present, China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan are deficient of official, unified translations, and many Time-honored brands have almost no English translation related to their brands. For example, the Chinese official websites of these famous brands such as Longchaoshou, Lai Tangyuan and Chenmapo Tofu have a very comprehensive and complete introduction in Chinese, ranging from the brand story, the traditional craftsmanship of the brand, and the characteristics of the brand, etc. However, the English version of the official website only translate the navigation title of the web page, while the content of the web page still retains in Chinese. In addition to this, no official English outreach introduction can be found. The lack of official foreign publicity translation seriously affects the promotion of these Time-honored Brands to the foreign world. The truth is at present, some Time-honored Brand enterprises have been operating poorly, with not enough economic strength to use traditional media to expand brand influence. Actually, Besides from the official external publicity translation, short video publicity posted by Internet bloggers, netizen reviews and web page introductions are also effective ways of outreach, as well as a powerful reflection of the outreach effect.

By searching the English names of China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan, it can be found that a few brands, such as Longchaoshou has a clear explanation of the English term on the Internet. At the same time there are also short videos produced by foreign bloggers introducing overseas Longchaoshou restaurants. As for some brands such as Luzhou Laojiao, although there is no specific explanation of the brand name on the website, but some brief introduction such as "Luzhou Laojiao is one of the oldest Chinese liquor brands" can be found on some English websites. Another case is the brand: Chenmapo Tofu, which has been worldly-famous for its spicy and flavorful tofu, which has not only been introduced on official websites, but many foreign bloggers' introductory videos and Mapo Tofu cooking-teaching websites can be found, and its spicy taste has won the hearts of diners at home and abroad. However, there are plenty of Sichuan local brands such as Lai Tangyuan, whose unofficial English web pages have little introduction, which shows that their outreach efforts need to be strengthened.

3.2 Analysis of the reasons accounting to the current situation

Time-honored Brands in Sichuan feature themselves in the unique humanistic history, geographical resources and craftsmanship. It is precisely because of the home-grown and century-old tradition of time-honored brands that many brands focus on the domestic market, or even just the local market in Sichuan, and have no awareness of external publicity. Therefore, there is no English translation on the official website. Due to the lack of a unified, official foreign translation, it is very difficult to promote these brands to the outside world. Some inaccurate and inappropriate translations showing on individual unofficial websites, not only fail to accurately present the unique charm and fine quality of the Time-honored brands, but also some inappropriate translations may even lead to misunderstanding or even misinterpretation of the brand, thus producing the negative effect of the original intention of foreign publicity.

From the linguistic perspective, Time-honored Brands in Sichuan normally have a strong local color, unique product technology, and rich in cultural and historical values, making appropriate translation more challenging. It is not only necessary to translate the characteristics and cultural connotations of century-old brands, but also to harmonize the cultural differences between China and foreign countries, so that the translation can be accepted and understood by foreign audiences while reflecting the characteristics of those brands.

4. Enlightments on Foreign Publicity Translation of China's Time-honored Brands in Sichuan from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

To make a good translation is to make a smooth conversation in all dimensions. Following the theory of Eco-translatology, it is important to follow the "three-dimension" principle, and translators need to consider various aspects when translating, aiming to achieve a dynamic balance of language dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. Therefore, the "three-dimension" principle is an essential translation approach to translations with rich historical and cultural connotations and distinctive local characteristics, like Time-honored Brands in Sichuan.

4.1 Language dimension

Language dimension refers to the translator's adaptation and transformation of two different language forms in the translation process. The translator needs to translate the intrinsic linguistic structure of the source language into the intrinsic linguistic structure of the target language, so special attention must be paid to the choice and use of grammatical structures, phrases, vocabulary and word classes during translating.

Chinese originated from Sino-Tibetan language family, while English originated from a maritime civilization belonging to one of the Indo-European languages. Different geographical civilizations, customs and habits have resulted in different forms of language forms. Chinese has an emphasis on parataxis, while English has an emphasis on hypotaxis. Therefore, Chinese vocabulary does not have lexical changes, and mainly relies on word order and implied logical relations to express different semantics; while English is rich in affixes, and expresses grammatical and logical relations through morphological changes of the words themselves, associated words, prepositions, etc. For example, in the translation of Sichuan Time-honored Brands, there are many idioms, four-character words and short sentences, which should be translated into English with attention to complete sentence structure and

correct logical relationships. Here is an featuring statement on Luzhou Laojiao: “采用传统酿制技艺酿造，酒质无色透明、窖香幽雅、绵甜爽净、柔和协调、尾净香长，风格典型。” When translated into English, these four-character words can not be translated word by word, but should be translated into complete sentences according to the English grammatical structure, in a way such as “*It is made by the traditional brewing techniques. The liquor is colorless with an elegant aroma; And the taste is sweet and clear, soft and harmonious, with a long and clean finish.*” Since “窖香幽雅” refers to the aroma of liquor, while “绵甜爽净、柔和协调、尾净香长” refers to the taste, two separate sentences are adopted, but one.

4.2 Cultural dimension

Cultural dimensional shift refers to the process by which translators pay close attention to the transmission and interpretation of bilingual cultural connotations. Because human beings form the same and similar association with some things in social practice, there is a certain degree of overlap between different cultures[5]. In Chinese and English, which belong to different language families and different cultural origins, it is easy to find out source words with specific target counterparts, such as Sun for “太阳” and Milk for “牛奶”. However, when it comes to culturally loaded words, it is difficult to spot its counterpart. For example, when searching for information on the brand of “龙抄手”, it shows that there are phonetic translation which is Longchaoshou from Pinyin, and direct translation which is called Dragon Wonton which should be paid special attention to since the cultural connotations of “龙” in Chinese is completely different from that of Dragon in the West. Around the 1940s, a merchant Zhang Guangwu, who is also the boss of “Nong Hua Tea House(浓花茶社)” located on Chunxi Road in Chengdu, was planning to open a wonton restaurant. So he borrowed the harmonic sound of his tea house’s name “Nong”, naming his restaurant in “Long(龙)”, which is a legendary creature in Chinese culture, representing wealth, wisdom, success, power and luck. While the Dragon in the Western culture is often a symbol of war, a symbol of terror, a carrier of evil, a synonym for power. If Dragon Wonton were used to interpretate “龙抄手”, it would convey some negative cultural connotations, thus, a phonetic translation would be more appropriate.

4.3 Communicative dimension

Although the translation of linguistic information and the transmission of cultural connotations are important, the communicative nature of translation should not be ignored. Whether the communicative purpose of the source language can be achieved in the target language is an important criterion to measure the communicative dimension. Translation is, in the final analysis, a practice of human communication. The communicative dimension is the interpreter’s choice and adjustment to the communicative purpose when undergoing the bilingual translation. The main communicative purpose of foreign publicity translation of Sichuan Time-honored Brands is to promote the products, and to promote those brands to the world, therefore, those brands can also have a foothold in the highly competitive foreign market. Thus, the translation needs to take into account the acceptance level of foreign audiences as much as possible. For example, the English translation of Jiannanchun Liquor retains the characteristics of Jiannanchun original brand name while explaining that Jiannanchun is a liquor brand, making it clear to the target audience at a glance, highlighting the brand’s characteristics while also easy to understand.

5. Conclusion

Foreign publicity translation of Sichuan Time-honored Brands is not only a big step for those brands to enter the overseas market, but also a step for traditional culture, geographical and humanistic characteristics and profound historical heritage behind those brands. To open the door to the world, is of great commercial and cultural importance. Under the theory of Eco-translatology, adopting language dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension into consideration, translators need to select and adjust between the three dimensions to achieve high degree of translation integration and conversion, so as to produce high-quality foreign translation. Standing on the ecologically-friendly foreign publicity translation, Sichuan Time-honored Brands can reach out and step into the overseas market with local culture and self-confidence.

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