

# Cosmetics Brand Names Translation Guided by Skopos Theory

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## Abstract

Translating cosmetics brand names considers culture differences and other factors, which is a complex system. With the guidance of Skopos Theory, suitable TL version can be accepted without understanding deviation as to achieve the purpose of sales. Cosmetics brand names have special linguistic features which attract consumers' desire to purchase. The features are concise and easy to spell, so the translated should keep them to arouse consumers' recognition and establish target market awareness. By using analysis of translated cosmetic brand names, this paper discusses Skopos Theory in guiding brand name translation and explores the feasibility of Skopos Theory to guide the translation of cosmetic brand names. Transliteration, literal translation, free translation and zero translation are some practical translation methods proposed in this paper with some fruits of these methods followed to support the idea that translated versions guided by Skopos Theory is acceptable.

## Keywords

Skopos Theory; Cosmetic Brand Names; Translation Methods.

## 1. Introduction

Skopos Theory is the dominant theory of German Functionalist Approaches, which believes that translation is a purposeful activity in the form and meaning, aiming to obtain its intended object. Translation should consider the background for the readers' understanding of target language. Translation process is determined by the translation purposes. Therefore, to adapt cross culture communication requirements and the demand of translation readers, translator should focus on the communication functions instead of the faithfulness to the original text and the equivalence to the source text. Skopos Theory has three basic rules which are Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. When it comes to cosmetics brand names, the first appeared word in mind is whether it is attractive to the costumers. Conciseness is the primary feature of a good cosmetic brand name. It is embodied in some aspects such as spelling and pronunciation. Consumers remember the goods more easily due to their simpleness. Brand names in English and translated Chinese names are easy to remember and attractive.

## 2. The Characteristics of Cosmetics Brand Names

Cosmetics brand names are concise, novelty and elegant. A good cosmetic brand name firstly has the feature of conciseness. It is embodied in some aspects such as spelling and pronunciation. The simple names make the consumer remember the goods more easily. These simple spelling and pronunciation names are easy for consumers to remember and write. The translation from Pounds to “旁氏”, Vichy to “薇姿”, Dior to “迪奥”, Kiehl's to “科颜氏” is obviously easy for the consumer to remember them. An attractive cosmetic name has new and unusual characteristics, allowing consumers to distinguish it easily from other products of the same kind. Brand names like SK-II, M.A.C, 3CE, using the first letters, numbers or alliteration etc, can give consumers its special imagination and creation so as to make the brand names and its translated names be identified easily. Brand name also represents the image of the

enterprise, so it should be appropriate and elegant. Consumers encounter Estee Lauder(雅诗兰黛), Lancome(兰蔻), L'oreal Paris(欧莱雅), Maybelline(美宝莲), Freeplus(芙丽芳丝) can associate with positive and good affairs, which established pretty good image of the brand in the consumer's mind. In all these translation names, Chinese words 雅, 兰, 美, 丽 have good meaning and elegant imagination. Good names can arouse consumers' desire to buy their products.

### 3. Translation Methods under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

The translation of cosmetics brand name uses some appropriate translation methods based on Skopos Theory, which transfers the beauty and conciseness.

#### 3.1. Literal Symbol Expressed by Transliteration

Transliteration is a translation method which changes letters, words, etc. into corresponding characters of another alphabet or language, refers to the way expressing a literal symbol of a language in the same or similar language in another language. When there are semantic blanks in source language, translation can not be directly started from lexical, grammatical and semantic conversion. Transliteration can be used to convert the meaning and context embodied in the SL version. Chinese and English have different sentence structure, also they are different in word meaning.

The brand name translation of Elegance(雅莉格丝), Fresh(馥蕾诗) Menthlatum(曼秀雷敦) used the translation method of transliteration, and it has also achieved good publicity because the Chinese characters “雅”, “馥蕾”, “曼秀” have the meaning of “elegance”, “beauty from nature”, “excellent” respectively. Generally speaking, most of the brand names translated use the method of transliteration, which contains the literal symbol and is easier to be accepted and remembered by the consumer of the target language. Not only does it retain the style of the source language to the maximum extent, but also makes the translation conform to the features of the cosmetic brand.

To a certain extent, transliteration conforms to functional equality principle of Skopos Theory. In the process of transliteration, the brand name of cosmetics has retained its sense of beauty in foreign taste and voice, and has successfully attracted consumers.

#### 3.2. Lexical and Rhetorical Coherence By Literal Translation

Literal translation has two main characteristics which are lexical and rhetorical coherence between SL and TL. Word-to-word translation defined as literal translation is an appropriate way to keep the source language meaning, which maintains Lexical coherence. Literal translation allows appropriate change or conversion in the process of language form to make the translation conform to the target language for the purpose of rhetorical coherence. That is to say, both the lexical meaning and the rhetorical meaning of the original are preserved, and the syntactic structure of the original text can be changed properly.

According to the requirement of Skopos Theory, literal translation is an appropriate translation method if we can find the same or similar words in the original text and translate them into same or similar words of the target text maintaining the cultural meaning of the original text and achieves the expected function of the target text. The Body Shop, a famous brand in Britain, produces body care and facial mask. The Body Shop is translated into “美体小铺” means beautiful body of tiny shop in Chinese context, which converts the beauty and loving nature of the brand. Fair Lady is translated as “贵夫人”, with Chinese meaning noblewoman, has the same image proposed in English culture. The translated Chinese name can arouse customers' close affinity to the products and is in accordance with the main marketing goal of making the

skin of women be smooth. There is no doubt that translation of its brand name by literal translation can reach this point.

### 3.3. Creativity in Free Translation

The main feature of free translation is to use the means of meaning transfer in the processing of lexical meaning and rhetoric meaning so as to reproduce the meaning in a more fluent and authentic way. When using the literal translation, text that conforms to a grammatical standard can be translated, but it is considered inappropriate, unreal or even bad in target language. Then we can choose the free translation which allows a certain amount of creativity in translation, but the key information of the original text is retained and the function of cosmetics brand name is clearly expressed.

Bourjois named from the founder Monsieur Alexandrenapoleon Bourjois. In order to make a deep impression on the consumer, the translator uses the free translation method to translate it into “妙巴黎” means wonderful Paris in Chinese, which is not literal translation. The brand of Bourjois is originated in France and its brand mark is the Paris tower. Through this translation, it reminds people of romantic Paris, and reminds us of its logo and products, which brings strong brand impression to consumers, and achieves its purpose of publicity, so as to achieve the function of cosmetics brand names. The brand Mamonde is translated “梦妆” in Chinese means dreamed making up. It is hard to find any similarity between SL and TL, but the Chinese is so wonderful to attract female to consume its making up products. Covermark translated as “傲丽” is also suitable because the Chinese meaning of the translated name is super beauty.

### 3.4. Preserving Origin by Zero Translation

Zero Translation means no translation or does not use other words in the target language to translate the words in the source language. In the case of zero translation, the sound and meaning of the brand names are preserved. Compared with other cosmetic brands names that use literal or free translation, they are more eye-catching and easier to be remembered by consumers.

After these brands SK-II, RMK, AHC, SUQQU, Calvin Klein, KIKO were introduced to China, they continue to use their original name to make them more exotic and attract a lot of consumers.

## 4. Fruits of Using Skopos Theory in Translation

Facing the increasing fierce competition in China's cosmetics market, more and more cosmetics manufacturers have already put the translation of cosmetic brand names on the agenda after they entered the overseas market, and then have a place in the cosmetics field. For cosmetic brands a good translated brand name can increase its sales volume and increase profits.

### 4.1. Widening Overseas Market

Name plays a vital role in almost all things in China. Chinese attach importance to names, a suitable person's name can bring fortune in their whole life, an imaginable real estate's name can increase its sales and price. With the development of the globalized economy, more and more foreign brands enter China, their first task is to have an acceptable name in accordance with Chinese culture. Whether the product can stand out in Chinese market, the brand name is the key point. There are many cases can be listed for their product sales, Ford is translated “福特” embodies the owner of the car has good fortune, Coca cola as “可口可乐” increased the brand image and sales. Therefore, the translation of brand name is of great significance to its development in China. Skopos Theory which focuses on practical purpose plays a positive guiding role in the translation of cosmetics name, the translated version can simulate its overseas marketing achievement. A successful translation of cosmetic brand name can convert consumers' attention to its products so it can stimulate consumption. The main consumers of

cosmetics are women, therefore, the translation of cosmetic brand names should conform to loving beauty psychology of female consumers, arouse consumers' desire to buy and achieve sales target.

#### 4.2. Improving Brand Loyalty

A successful translation of cosmetic brand name not only can play an important role in guiding consumption but also can bring the deep brand impression. An appropriate name arouses consumers' attention which probably results in their purchasing activity. A good name can embrace the consumers loyalty to the brand. The brand loyalty is vital to the enterprises. Sometimes, customers choose to buy a product does not due to the product is the best but the brand loyalty. That is to say, customers always choose this brand with a good sense of the brand. Therefore, a good brand name translation can attract customers to enhance the customer's sense of identity to the brand. In a word, there is no denying that the brand name translation is vital in improving brand loyalty .

Based on Skopos Theory, this paper clarifies the purpose, the desired results of cosmetic brand translation and the translation methods which can greatly improve the efficiency and success rate of the associated products. For cosmetic brand translation, its commercial purpose is important in overseas market. A suitable translation method can maximize its commercial purpose. The translation methods mentioned in this paper are not independent of each other, but complement each other. Choosing a suitable translation method according to the actual situation and analyzing their function is critical in translation practice.

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