

# Study of Domestication and Foreignization on Commercial Advertisements Translation

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**Abstract.** Commercial advertisements aim at raising consumers' purchasing desire and promoting the sales of products. It is believed that commercial advertisement translation can affect the sales of foreign products and profits of foreign enterprises. Advertisements are very crucial when a company is going to enter another country, because it can affect customer's acceptance and preferences of products. It has important practical significance to study commercial advertisement translation strategies. Domestication and foreignization are the widely used translation strategies in advertisements translation. In this paper, the application of these two translation methods will be discussed by analyzing some typical cases.

## 1. Introduction

With the economic development and the expansion of globalization, commercial advertisements have significant effects on international business. Commercial advertisements not only popularize the images of products but also increase the sales volume, which brings lots of benefits to business. An increasing number of enterprises expect that advertisement translation can help them promote their products and expand their overseas market worldwide. Thus appropriate translation strategies are required to achieve the commercial needs and expectations.

Yet the language in commercial advertisement is fairly different from other forms of texts, especially in words application and grammatical structures. It is not only information exchange between two different languages, but the exchange of ideas between two different cultures and different social practices. The process of translation involves language choosing, which includes the choice of language form and communication strategy. Considering the differences, it is necessary for translators to adopt various translation methods and strategies to realize the goal of information delivery and achieve the function of advertisements.

Due to the different language features and cultural background, commercial advertisement translation has created ambiguity and many problems, so translators need great care in choosing proper translation strategies. As a result, a variety of translation methods and strategies are chosen to serve specific commercial communication purposes. The commercial advertisement translator is not only responsible for the source language, but also the target language receivers. It is not only necessary to handle original language exotic culture properly but also important to avoid misunderstanding to achieve "translation of harmony."

## 2. Domestication and Foreignization

Domestication and foreignization are the commonly discussed translation strategies. The concept of domestication and foreignization were introduced by American translator Venuti in his book - *The Translator's Invisibility*. Domestication advocates that translation should be based on the target language or the reader and the cultural content of source language should be replaced with that of target language. While foreignization advocates that translation should be based on the source

language or the original author and the original cultural characteristics should be retained. Translation is a complex form of communication involving authors, translators and readers. Translators need to consider the type of text, the author's intention, the purpose of translation and the reader's request. Domestication and foreignization cannot be distinguished good or bad, different translation methods conform to different content in contexts.

As a special language user, translator needs to choose appropriate translation strategy to realize the function of intercultural communication successfully. However excessive domestication or foreignization is detrimental to the quality of the translation, which can make the information in translation obscure and dull, or lose the cultural and linguistic features of the source language. Translation strategies need to adapt to different context and different translation purposes to achieve better communication.

### **3. Domestication and Foreignization Strategy in Commercial Advertisement Translation**

Commercial advertisements have unique linguistic and lexical features. Convincing potential consumers and stimulating their desire to buy are considered to be the purpose of commercial advertisement. In general, words in commercial advertisements have strong rhythm and coordination, superposition, parallelism and influence of propaganda.

For advertisements, there are four goals to be achieved: catch attention, arouse interest, create desire and induce action, which are also important in commercial advertisements. But since there are cultural difference and taboo in different nations, equivalent translation does not exist. Proper translation strategy has always been the solution for translators and most companies. Domestication and foreignization are the two widely used translation strategy in commerce, such as brand name, advertisement, instruction book, business slogan, etc. Each company expects a best way to localize and promote their brands or products for business profits and expansion in target nations. A good advertisement helps the company to build strong image while obscure or inaccurate information may lead to lose the customers and potential market. Customers cannot get clear and specific information of unfamiliar products from poor translation.

#### **3.1 Domestication**

Consumers in target language and cultural background will have problems in understanding the advertisement, if they don't know the foreign culture. Domestication considers the target language as its destination and proposes more target language elements in translation. From the perspective of domestication, different cultural backgrounds, different customs, different language environment, as well as religious beliefs are important for translators when choosing translation strategies. In the process of translating, domestication is chosen in order to improve understanding of the advertisement. There are some examples as following:

Example 1: Time is what you make of it. (Swatch)

Translation: 天长地久。

Translator adopts the "four words" Chinese idiom mode, which reflects the concise and refined style of original advertisement. In Chinese "天长地久" has the meaning of time which is the focus expression in original advertisement. In the meantime this idiom shows the excellent quality and durable feature of the product. If it is translated as "时间就是你如何来利用它", the original meaning is clear, but it is hard to understand, and the commercial effect is diminished.

Example 2: This is how. (Siemens)

Translation: 知其道，用其秒。

In the sentence "知其道，用其秒", translator conforms to the Chinese classic style of writing and the target reader can understand the key point in the advertisement easily. If the translator applies foreignization, "这是如何" is not logical expression in Chinese, and has no practical meaning of an advertisement.

In the above examples, there are more or less difference on the vocabulary and structure in original and target text. The purpose of the advertisement is to introduce and promote the products, thus domestication gives target customers more opportunities to understand the advertisements. In these examples, consumers are regarded as the core, in order to meet the consumer's psychological needs and open the target market, the translator makes great alternation in translation. Differences between two cultures are concealed by this strategy, and the cultural value of target language replaces the original one. Since there is no obstacle in understanding the content of advertisement, it is acceptable for the target consumers.

### 3.2 Foreignization

A successful advertisement should take the target language consumer's cultural background into consideration, and arouse consumer's desire to buy. Hence multiple translation strategies should be developed in commercial advertisement translation. Foreignization can not only maintain the original foreign cultural characteristics, but also help readers absorb and learn exotic elements to achieve commercial and cultural communication. Although domestication is widely accepted in translation, foreignization can still produce unexpected wonderful effect.

Example 1: Where there is a way for car, there is a Toyota. (Toyota)

Translation: 车到山前必有路，有路必有丰田车。

This translation copies the old Chinese saying “车到山前必有路，船到桥头自然直”。 Translator uses “车到山前必有路” to maintain the original meaning, then “有路必有丰田车” to achieve the commercial purpose. The translation has same number of words and the structure, which is in accordance with the original English advertisement. And the original words and expressions are reserved. There is almost no literal alternation in translation, which can help target reader understand and remember smoothly.

Example 2: M&Ms melt in your mouth, not in your hand. (M&Ms)

Translation: 只溶在口，不溶在手。

In the original M&Ms advertisement, the two preposition phrases *in your mouth* and *in your hand* not only interpret the benefits brought by the upgraded product package of M&Ms' chocolate, but also illustrate the good quality of the product. While the translation retain the same preposition structure and make no creation to reach its maximum intensity of the original advertising effect. In this case foreignization is considered as the appropriate way to keep the source language style and achieve the purpose of translation.

In the above advertisements, both the lingual features and the key words of the original advertisements are maintained in the translation. There is no change on the selling points of the product but the translation of original message can also convey the original information. The source language and target language achieve coincidence both in function and structure. Although domestication is widely accepted as an effective translation strategy in commercial advertisement translation, it is necessary to adopt foreignization to achieve the ideal effect.

## 4. Summary

In the above domestication examples, translation text and the original text are more or less different on the vocabulary and structure. To some degree, translator chooses domestication strategy and achieves adaption in translation. Whereas, refer to the features of source language, translator can keep the original sentence syntax and rhetorical features by foreignization to convey the original language characteristic clearly, and achieve coincidence in the function. So foreignization strategy can also achieve the goal of advertisement successfully.

Commercial advertisement translation is an intercultural communication activity with strong purpose, which is different from other text translation. It is a complex selection process, in which both psychological and cultural factor should be involved. The translators need to consider different language structure and expression habits. In order to adapt to different translation purposes and

different readers, suitable translation strategies should be chosen to meet the special commercial business situation, and make the commercial advertisement realize practical significance.

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