

Social Motivations of Brand Naming from Adaptation Theory

SHI Li-na¹

ZHANG Ping²

Abstract: Brand research is in full swing in the commodity area. Up to now the researches concerning the study of brand covers widely from brand naming to brand translation. However, research on the social motivations of brand naming in terms of adaptation theory is rare. Based on this theory, this paper aims to explore the influence of social motivations on brand naming for the purpose of having a good guidance of brand naming, making the brand more attractive and promoting the successful sales of commodities in the severe competition.

Key words: adaptation theory; brand naming; social motivations; communicative context

1. INTRODUCTION

With the development of commodity economy, the market is full with all kinds of commodities. On most occasions, the commodity is known by the majority through its brand, which serves not only as a representation but also a symbol of commodity. A good brand is of great importance for determining the success of product image of an enterprise. Therefore, a proper and good brand will not only impress the customer much, but also help to bring ideal economic profits to the enterprise. In addition, it would determine the rise and fall of business (JIANG Shu, 2010). Therefore, the research upon brand is of far-reaching importance. As for brand study, researches in this aspect have been done widely from brand naming to brand translation, yet the research is rather rare on the cultural and social motivations of brand naming in terms of adaptation, and this is what the author will try to do in this paper. From the point of view of adaptation theory, this paper will research on the cultural and social motivations contained in brand naming, which is based on such influential factors as the social background, culture motivation, social status of potential consumers. And its main purpose is to inquire into the cultural and social motivations involved in brand naming, so as to achieve better effects of the brand and finally to sell the commodity well.

¹ MA candidate, School of Foreign Languages of Yantai University. 264005, China. Research Interest: Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis. Email: shilina19840411@126.com

² Associate Professor; School of Foreign Languages of Shanghai University. 200436, China. Research Interest: Critical Linguistics, Language Teaching. Email: zhangappleuk2001@yahoo.com.cn

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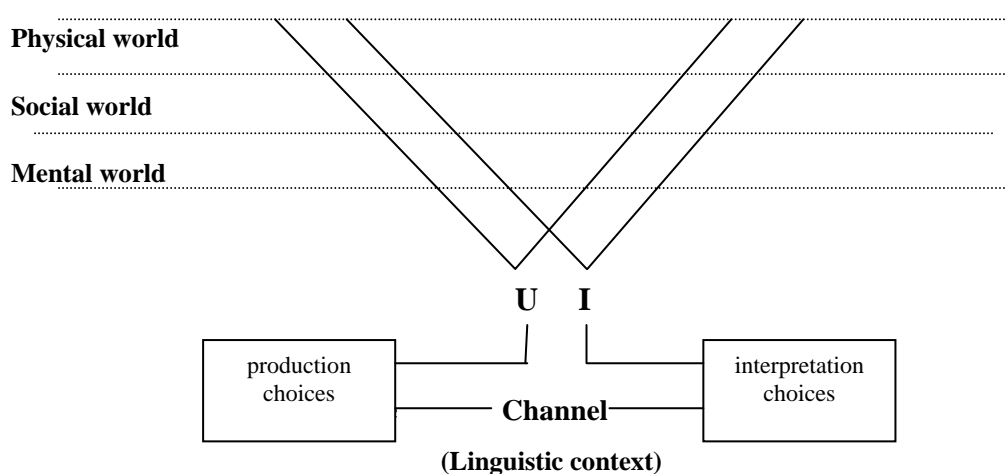
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section the author prefers to review some fundamental and relevant theories concerned in this research.

2.1 Adaptation theory

Verschueren, the secretary-general of Belgium International Pragmatic Society started to ferment his adaptation theory since the 1980s, it was put forward later in 1999 in his new book “*Understanding Pragmatics*”. According to Verschueren the study of pragmatics aims at the use of language, or at the study of language phenomenon through the properties and the process of language use. Language use is a continuous choice-making process upon various language phenomena. It is the process of choosing language form and strategy based on different degrees of awareness by language users through a comprehensive angle of cognition, society, and culture, either from the inner or outer aspects of language itself. The reason why users in the process of language use are able to make appropriate linguistic choice is that language itself is possessed with three basic interrelated attributes or properties, namely variability, negotiability, and adaptability (Verschueren, 1999).

The adaptability of language is the property which enables its users to make flexible options among the available items, so as to fulfill the communication needs. Contextual Correlation of Adaptability is of particular significance among the features of it. Verschueren believes that the Contextual Correlation of Adaptability is the adaptation of language in use with communicative context. Those context factors that need to be conformed include the physical world, the social world and the mental world (Verschueren, 1999). And their adaptive relation is shown by the following figure.



(From HE Ziran, XIE Chaoqun, CHEN Xinren, 2006)

From the figure above, it is obvious that in so far as the communicative context is concerned, there is nothing more important than both sides of communication, that is the utter (U) and the interpreter (I). The communicators choose relevant factors as contextual factors from the above “three worlds”. The physical world mainly refers to the temporal and spatial reference; the social world indicates those aspects of the dependence relationship, power relationship, equal relationship and culture factors between the speaker and the hearer; the mental world refers to those psychological factors of personality, emotion, and motives, etc (Verschueren , 1999 : 70).The mental world of communicators directly affect the production and the perception of utterances. The speech used by the communicators in the process of

communication implicates a series of adaptive, subtle, and complicated social motives. Consequently, Verschueren believes that context is not given in advance, but it is constantly updated with dynamic in the communicating process.

2.2 Brand naming

“Brand”, i.e. “trademark” is a distinctive combination of product name, pattern, and symbols, etc.. It is used to distinguish from other product of the similar kind. It mainly includes brand and brand logo. A good brand naming will directly determines the economic benefits and the survival of an enterprise (HU Wenzhong, 1994).

Brand naming is influenced by various cultural factors. Culture itself is a complicated concept, which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, ethnics, law, customs, abilities and habits acquired by being a social member. Language is one part of the complicated cultural system, and brand naming based on linguistic signs is inevitably affected by culture, thus brand naming must take into consideration of the cultural background of the target market consumers, including their knowledge, national customs, religious taboo, aesthetic taste, etc.

The brand naming, which fits the particular cultural background of potential consumers, can best cater for their consuming psychology, be accepted by consumers and stimulate their consumption image and desire, therefore, generally lead to the coming along purchasing (WEI Xinqiang, 2007). Brand naming should adapt the potential consumption psychology of the target market, such as accommodating the potential customers` self-perception (XIAN Wangqiu, 2004; LI Hhuamin, CUI Yuqin, 2010).

When talking about the study of the commodity brand, some scholars have summarized the particular motivation towards some particular brand. Taking “Coca cola” as an example, this special brand is regarded as being synonymous with carbonated drink. While entering into Chinese market, this brand fully undertakes the Chinese local strategy (CHEN Lin, 2007). This shows that the study of the adaptation to consumers` culture perception has closely related with the social motivation of consumer group or the merchant, the person who design the brand. This social motivation includes such factors as the social background, the cultural concept, the identity of customers, and their social status, etc. This paper will try to do a deep research upon the aspects of the social background, the culture motivations and the social status of potential consumers, which are contained within the brand naming.

3. THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND CULTURAL MOTIVATION IN BRAND NAMING

3.1 The social background in brand naming

Under a special social background, through a concrete analysis of the influential factors of brand naming, it may easily find out that the special social background is of potential guidance for brand naming. The analysis of the social background with which brand naming is complied will reflect the dynamic adaptability of brand naming of commodity in communicative context. For instance, the Italian fashion brand “KAPPA”, it was named by the scene that male and female models taking a short break after work. “KAPPA” is the Greek alphabet which implies that men and women sit back to back, because “KAPPA” believes that both men and women can share the interests in sports. In addition, whether in or out of the sports site, men and women should also support each other in order to achieve the set goals. The brand was named in the 1970s, when there was a cultural rise in the style of casual clothing among young Italians, and in the germination of the concept of the mixed-gender clothing. The change of dress style adapts to the new way of life, and it has become a strong symbol of promoting human beauty and personality.

Under such a social background, “KAPPA” as a brand reflects that its language choice has fully

complied with the need of the communicative context. It adapts to the physical world of the communicative context, the reform of social and cultural in Italy in line with the temporal and spatial conditions. At the same time, this adaptation involves the social motivations inclusive of the social background. On the one hand, such kind of adaptation itself meets with the social background in which people pursue equality and individualism. The people who name the brand have adapted to this social background so as to induce the potential consumption aspiration. On the other hand, brand naming should adapt to the objective requirement of people's mental world that is to reflect the social facts at that time. In summary, brand naming should conform to the social background, which reflects the adaptation in three aspects of communicative context of the adaptation theory. In particular, it indicates the motivation relations at the two levels of the social and mental world, which also reflect the function of social motivation.

3.2 The culture motivation reflected by brand

Brand naming is influenced by certain cultural motivation. For example, the famous beverage, "Coca Cola", "Coca", its Chinese translation is "古柯葉", which is a raw material for cocaine; and "Cola" means a cola fruit, which can be used to make drinks. While entering the Chinese market, this brand use the reiterative Chinese words "可口可樂", then this brand merged into the Chinese culture (CHEN Lin, 2006). This brand not only reflects the characteristics of the brand itself, arouse a sense of delicious, adapts to the traditional Chinese culture, but also demonstrates that the brand translation properly adapts to the culture motivation of Chinese people. In addition, the brand "Coca Cola" also reflects the compliance of the structure of speech. That is, on the level of sound, word type (reiterative Chinese words), it adapts well to the characteristics of structure of Chinese language and makes it sound attractive.

The businessman, adopting this brand "Coca cola" with a tasting, appreciating and an objective tone, greatly stimulates the desire of the consumption of Chinese consumers. At the deep semantic level, this brand starts with the motivation of the traditional culture, adapts to the Chinese thought of "rectification of names", and therefore it demonstrates the rich semantic meaning in its Chinese version.

Similarly, the other brands, such as "王老吉" in drinks, Costume "金利來"(Goldlion) and "富紳"(Virtue), "康佳" (KONKA) in electrical appliances, "捷達"(JETTA) in transportation, "佳能"(CANNON) in photographic equipment, and "雅芳"(AVON) in cosmetics, etc. (LIU Dan-Dan, 2007). These words, whether it is "王老吉", "金利來", "富紳", "康佳", "捷達", or, "佳能", "雅芳", are from multiple aspects, which embody the Chinese people's praying for good luck, good health, longevity, good fortune, etc. These desirable expectations are pursued by the Chinese for thousands of years in their traditional culture.

Under the influence of the brand "可樂", which appropriately adapts to the concept of Chinese culture, other brands like "百事可樂", "白領可樂", "天府可樂", "萬事可樂", "華事可樂" have prompted timely. These brands fully reflect the traditional Chinese culture and the dynamic compliance of language, that is they complied with the culture emotions of the mass psychology. By making analysis from the adaptation perspective, we could see that the brand naming of these commodities gives a full play to the potential inducing function of culture motivation, and adapts to the consumer's traditional culture and aspirations. Thereby, this facilitates the business to achieve their sale objectives.

4. THE SOCIAL MOTIVATION IN BRAND NAMING

Brand naming is closely related with the social motivation of consumers. Social motivation could be aroused by different factors, but in this section the author would like to lay stress on such influential factors as the identity of consumer group and the individual based on the adaptation theory.

4.1 The identity of consumer group in brand naming

“Identity” is a concept with a broad meaning. It includes such factors as the consumer’s age, educational level, and status as well. Brand itself is presumed for specific consumer groups. Consumers and the commodity constitutes a specific communication context in the sales process, that is how to make the commodity adapt to consumers’ psychological world, including adapting to consumers’ identity, psychological, personality, ideas and other social motivations. This is the most significant in the make-up of the brand naming. For many cosmetic products, their brand naming should conform to the potential psychological trend of their consumers’ pursuing for being young and beautiful. For instance, among the group of consumers quite a mount of them have received a high level of education with certain social status. These factors have become indispensable social motivations for brand naming.

The famous French cosmetics brand “LANCOME” (蘭蔻) takes roses as its brand logo. Rose itself is a symbol of love and beauty, which happens to adapt to the majority of women’s, especially young woman’s individual psychological pursuit of beauty and love. At the same time, “LANCOME” will remind the Chinese of the traditional poem of the "bloom of youth" when consumers are close to the cosmetic, thus coming out the association that meets consumers’ purchasing desire. At this point, such consumer-oriented brand naming will highlight its own appeal of consumption. Consequently, it can be seen that merchants, being the representatives of brands, could attract the attention of consumers and sell the commodity well as long as they adapt to the objective psychological reality of potential consumer group in the communicative context. Other brands also have the same potential function, such as “CHANEL”(香奈兒), “KISSME”(奇士美), “CLEAN & CLEAR”(可伶可俐).

All the cosmetics brands mentioned above conform to the female consumers’ consumption trends, in particular, they follow their mental tendencies of young, beauty, affection etc. At the same time, these brands create a special artistic conception. With this kind of adaptation to the consumer's identity, they are able to grasp the hearts of consumers, thus they can facilitate the successful sales of cosmetics.

4.2 The individual factors in brand naming

A consumer, as an individual of the life of a consumer group, she/he will often take the unspoken rules and standards of the society to set an “ideal-self”. Only by adapting to such individual set of “ideal-self”, can commodity reach the consumer group’s ideal-self. Taking female for example in terms of sociolinguistics, we can see that women generally live at lower social level, and they try to improve their social status so as to make the society respect them. Therefore, women usually choose those commodities that can increase their social recognition or social status. As for cosmetic products, their brand naming can go along with the potential “ideal-self”, so that they are able to attract more female consumers. For example, the cosmetics “ARTISTRY”(雅姿), the brand itself is a symbol of beauty and art, together with the elucidation of its advantages in anti-aging, removing wrinkles, enhancing femininity, and other qualities for benefiting women’s life, it firmly captures the hearts of female consumers and makes a better selling for this cosmetics. Other brands also have the similar potential function to attract the consumer, such as “巧媳婦”, “海天”, “騰龍”, “華碩” can all adapt to consumer’s “self-ideal”, therefore, they can achieve the purpose to survive the brand.

5. CONCLUSION

As for brand naming, this article has offered an interpretation from an adaptive perspective on the culture and social motivations in brand naming. This study could enable us to realize that there is the indispensable culture and social motivations between brand naming and potential consumers. This research also reflects that as long as the brand naming adapts to the factors of consumer’s identity, cultural attitudes, and aspirations, it will help the businessman to achieve their selling objectives. In

addition, at present some new consuming incentives are emerging, such as online shopping, TV shopping, consumer credit and celebrity agents, etc., which start to have some new influence on the sale of commodity, and which also worth our efforts to make further research.

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