

Research on Localization Translation Strategies of New Energy Vehicle Brand Names in the Context of Overseas Expansion — Taking BYD as an Example

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Abstract: As China's new energy vehicle industry continues to develop, various domestic independent brands have expanded their overseas operations to varying degrees. Many outstanding domestic brands have begun establishing a presence abroad, with brands such as BYD, Geely, Chery, and Changan already showing significant progress. An indispensable part of these brands' overseas expansion is, of course, the localization and translation of their products. High-quality localization enables consumers to gain an initial understanding of the products, thereby stimulating their desire to purchase and ultimately boosting sales. At the same time, it serves as a means of promoting the country's technology and culture on a national level, effectively attaining two objectives or gaining two advantages by a single move. Taking BYD Brand as an example, this article explores how companies handle the critical element of passenger vehicle naming in their overseas localization efforts, with the aim of providing valuable insights and guidance for the localization efforts of various automotive brands.

Keywords: Translation studies; Localization; Automotive translation; Overseas sales strategies

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1. An exploration of BYD's overseas brand development

With the gradual development of the country, China's car companies have gotten rid of the previous stereotypes, replaced by technology, intelligence, and advanced features. Many brands have laid out overseas and have launched corresponding products to seize the overseas market. As a product, a good name is naturally the basis of sales ^[1]. In translation, the translator needs to carefully consider how to express it appropriately and clearly so that the target readers can fully understand the meaning of the text ^[2]. Therefore, good brand translation can not only improve sales and meet consumers' recognition, but also realize the

overseas dissemination of excellent culture.

As the leader of the new energy automobile industry, in the passenger car field of the BYD brand, it has realized the cooperation and differentiated competition of five different sub-brands in China, which can meet the consumption demand of consumers in the whole scene. If it is an overseas car company, it cannot be named for overseas products according to the traditional layout of the five brands. As a new car company, the first thing should be to integrate the brand, reduce the number of sub-brands, and deepen the memory for consumers. Therefore, in the strategy of external publicity, the BYD brand integrates the original “Dynasty, Ocean, Denza, Formula Leopard, and YangWang.” After consulting BYD’s overseas official website, it is found that the two brands of “Dynasty” and “Ocean” have achieved two-in-one, and the BYD brand is used as the brand name for the main cost-effective product. For higher-level products, BYD has integrated the “Equation Leopard” brand, which is the main cross-country brand in China, and the “Tengshi” brand, which is light luxury style, into a “Denza” brand. In the treatment of luxury brands, BYD has retained the original name, that is, to retain the “YangWang” brand, as the current highest-end product line exists. Since then, “BYD,” “Denza,” and “YangWang” three-line brands have devoted themselves to creating different products for overseas users and meeting the product needs of various users.

2. A study on overseas product naming for new energy vehicles

With the overseas layout of various excellent brands, many other brands have also emerged with many excellent naming methods. As a Chery brand that has long been committed to the overseas export industry, the English translation of its model “Ruihu” is “Tiggo.” Through the pronunciation reference of “tiger,” consumers can directly understand the positioning and tone of the product, directly relate to “tiger,” and show the strength of the series of models ^[3]. Chery brand uses the name in more than 80 countries around the world, which improves the international recognition of the brand and model. In addition, Geely’s dual-car models “Boyue L” and “Binyue L” use the two names of “Starray” and “Coolray,” respectively ^[4]. They use “Star” plus “Ray” and “Cool” plus “Ray,” and do not use a literal translation of Chinese car names. Make the product more in line with the positioning characteristics of international products, the combination of “Star” and “Ray,” echo the starry sky, and rays, create a sense of movement and speed, and match the movement positioning of the SUV model; the “Cool” and “Ray” used in the “Binyue L” model are a detailed interpretation of the product. On the surface, the younger positioning of the model is directly facing the young group, with its own trend attributes, catchy, and convenient for global communication ^[5].

Since then, people can see that no matter what kind of translation strategy is adopted, the overseas translation strategies of new energy vehicles mainly focus on the following aspects. Pronunciation is preferred, short syllables are usually used, and there is no bad combination. The global mainstream language is usually used, which is in line with the habits of foreign users ^[6]. At the same time, in the way of naming, it is more inclined to match the meaning and positioning, such as Geely’s “Starray” and “Coolray” models, to create a younger portrait of the owner, linking youth with sports and trends. As a global model, it is convenient for the memory of global users. Chery brand chooses to use “Tiggo,” comparing this model to the style of “Tiger,” which can reflect the strength and off-road style of the model. These are examples of efficient overseas communication of excellent brand names.

3. Analysis of BYD's overseas product name translation strategy

3.1. Overview of BYD's sub-brand translation strategy

As a domestic brand, how to accurately convey the connotation and extension meaning of domestic new energy vehicle advertisements to foreign consumers is the focus and difficulty of translation work, and brand name is the most intuitive element of investigation ^[7]. Once any error or problem occurs in translation, the result is fatal ^[8]. After the unified integration of the brand, the retained sub-brand names are “BYD,” “Denza,” and “YangWang.” First, the brand name is analyzed. The predecessor of the “BYD” name is “Build your dream,” and the current version is abbreviated from this. The “Denza” brand is a sub-brand created in cooperation with the Mercedes-Benz brand, and it is also one of the only sub-brands that is more in line with the reading habits of foreign readers. As the highest-end product of the BYD Group, the “YangWang” brand not only bears the determination to break into the foreign market as a luxury car, but also preserves excellent Chinese culture. Its “will not be” spirit is firmly reflected in the naming method, and the excellent Chinese culture will be innovated, which is “Chinese luxury.” Looking at the naming methods of sub-brands, people can see the different strategic ways of the BYD Group. Applying the three translation methods of literal translation, creative translation, and transliteration to the naming methods of sub-brands can better meet the needs of different overseas consumers. It can also be seen that BYD Group strives to innovate and be enterprising.

3.2. Analysis of product naming translation strategies across different country websites

By querying the official website of BYD Group (Europe, America, Australia, etc.), the most popular brand is “BYD.” Because of its pricing and rich configuration, there are many products, and the name of its products is also concentrated in the following translation methods:

3.2.1. Statistics on transliterated model names

On Brazil's official website, people can find the “Song Pro” model for the same type in China. Its translation is “Song Pro,” directly transliterated into the same model in China, and the same translation method is used for the “Yuan Up” model, whose translation is “Yuan Pro,” “Yuan Plus” is “Yuan Plus,” and so on. The reason why this translation method is adopted is that the brand can retain the traditional pinyin elements and display the original “Dynasty” brand model reasonably. If the brand of “Dynasty” is directly added as a suffix, it will make foreign consumers feel confused. The main reason is that foreign users do not have such a rich historical heritage of “Dynasty.” Blindly copying the translation of “Song Dynasty” will play the opposite role. Therefore, most of the models under the “Dynasty” sub-brand use this transliteration method to directly refer to the pronunciation and the name of the model. It is convenient for foreign users to understand. At the same time, these transliterated versions have also been verified. They are versions that can be read in local languages, promoting the traditional culture of pinyin. In the suffix “Pro or Plus” and other versions, it is also convenient for consumers to directly understand the differences between different versions of the car. It is a combined translation method, which is efficient and straightforward. In the translation of sub-brands, we mentioned the sub-brand “YangWang.” In the query on the official website, we found that the naming method of its models is the same as that of the domestic versions, such as “YangWang U8” transliterated as “YangWang U8”, and so on, which retains the product tonality of luxury brands and promotes excellent traditional culture ^[9].

3.2.2. Statistics on literal translations of vehicle models

In many countries, this translation method is widely used in the translation of vehicle models, and even occupies half of the translation of vehicle models. As the most widely used version, literal translation can clearly and concisely express the meaning of the text, reflecting the work value of localized translation. The reason is also inseparable from the positioning of BYD products. In the positioning of BYD Group, as the two parallel brands of “Dynasty” and “Ocean,” the two complement each other. After replacing the appearance and interior with a unified platform, the model will become a new model to meet the needs of different domestic consumers. In the overseas market, such a radical strategy cannot be used. Therefore, BYD chooses to combine the two into one and build together. Most of the models using literal translation come from the previous “ocean” sub-brands, such as “dolphin,” “seal,” “sea lion,” “shark,” and so on. Such words have been widely disseminated in both Chinese and English. Therefore, the translation of these models is more concise and efficient. For the distinction between different models, BYD uses the original double-digit name, reduced to one, such as “Seal 06” reduced to “Seal 6,” and “Sea Lion 07” reduced to “Sealion 7,” which is also more in line with English reading habits. Therefore, the English versions of the above models are “Dolphin,” “Seal,” “Sealion,” and “Shark.” At the same time, different numbers and letters are used as suffixes to distinguish different versions of different models. However, there are also some special cases, such as the “Shark” pickup, whose name is first named in English and then introduced into China. Like the different versions of the “Dolphin” model, it is divided into “dolphin” and “seagull” models in China. These are some small episodes in the naming process, but they do not affect the overall naming translation strategy.

3.2.3. Statistics on naming conventions for other versions

In addition to the above two main naming translation methods, there are also some special naming methods, which are analyzed in this integration. Through the official website case analysis, such as SUV models, the widely acclaimed “ATTO” model is traced back to the domestic version, and its name is more diverse^[10]. On the European official website, the name of the “Yuan” model is “ATTO 3,” which is the same as the Japanese naming method. However, according to the above analysis, the “Yuan” model on the Brazilian official website adopts the naming rule of “Yuan,” which is slightly different. According to the author’s analysis, it may be to take care of the language pronunciation habits of different countries. Through verification, it is also found why the naming method of “ATTO” is used. The word “ATTO” is derived from the word “Attosecond” in physics, which is a very small unit of time. The intention is to integrate speed, youth, and vitality into consumers.

In addition, in the search on Brazil’s official website, it was also found that the naming method of the domestic model “Destroyer 05,” that is, the “Qin Plus” model on the same platform, has undergone some different adjustments. Due to the naming method of the domestic standard model, it does not conform to the language habits of local consumers. Therefore, in the process of processing, the author found that BYD Group named the model “BYD King,” which is obviously different from the above translation. The reason may be the retention of the naming habit of “dynasty,” but it cannot directly transform the specific Chinese dynasties into English versions, which will make local consumers confused. Therefore, the word “king,” common to all cultures, is retained to achieve cultural resonance and reduce the decline in sales caused by cultural thresholds.

In the process of searching the official website of the “Denza” brand, the author also found that the

domestic “Formula Leopard” brand (ie, the equation leopard) has undergone some changes in the way it is named abroad. For example, domestic models such as “Leopard 5,” “Leopard 8,” and other models directly follow the “Denza” brand sales network on the Australian official website. The main reason is that the “Denza” brand is more well-known overseas and highly recognized by consumers, which has a positive effect on promoting sales. Therefore, in the translation of naming, there is no use of transliteration, literal translation, or other habits. Instead, the letter “B” in the pinyin “Bao” is adopted, and the numbers “5” and “8” are retained and reorganized into “B5,” “B8,” and other models. The naming is more concise and convenient for memory.

4. Conclusion

In the field of passenger cars, the BYD brand can be described as the industry leader. In the layout of the product line, it has also realized the dislocation competition of various brands, and can meet the needs of different consumers ^[11]. After searching the official website information, it is found that the naming rules of the BYD brand for foreign products present three stages, and these three stages are also based on different product requirements. For example, for the “Ocean” series products, it is necessary to directly pass the original naming to the target customer to reduce misunderstanding; for the “dynasty” series of products, it cannot directly convey the original concept of “dynasty” in Chinese culture, but use more reasonable treatment methods, such as transliteration and free translation, to properly handle and increase consumers’ interest in products. For products in the direction of light luxury, such as the “Teng Shi” brand, the structure of retaining English alphabet abbreviations and numbers is adopted, which is close to the naming method of traditional automobile enterprises, improves the circulation of products, and promotes sales. At the time of the draft, the author also found that the new model “Z9GT” of the “Denza” brand adopted a unified naming rule at home and abroad, and no change has taken place. It can also be seen that the internationalization strategy of the BYD brand is gradually advancing. For the group’s highest-end product “YangWang” brand, the brand name has not been adjusted, and the transliteration of pinyin has been retained. The specific vehicle positioning still refers to the naming rules of the “Denza” brand, and uses the collocation structure of English letters and Arabic numerals for naming translation. However, no matter what kind of naming method, it is in order to serve the ultimate goal, that is, the sales of products. Therefore, in the naming process of automobile enterprises, companies can refer to the language habits of localized countries, or the local culture of the country, etc., so as to better deal with the naming of brand names and achieve the purpose of improving sales.

Disclosure statement

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