

Analysis on Language Features of English Brand Names

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Abstract

As the deepening of the world economic globalization, more and more foreign brands flow to China. At the same time, a large number of Chinese products are being sold in the international market. In order to make our products occupy a place in international market, it is essential for us to create good English brand names for our products. Therefore, we should study and explore the characteristics of the English brand names deeply. First of all, this paper explains the origin of brand name and the principles of brand naming. Second, on the basis of that, it elaborates the common types of the English brand name. At last, combined with the basic knowledge of the linguistics, it analyzes the morphological features, phonological features, rhetorical features and the features of semantic association. By analyzing the English brand names, we know some significant features of English brand names which not only expands our horizon, but also enables us to have a better understanding of English brand names. Most importantly, it is conducive to the creation of better English brand names for our China's products so that the chances of getting success in the global market will be increased.

Keywords

English brand names, language features, linguistics.

1. Introduction

In the background of world economic globalization, a large number of Chinese products are flowing into the international market and how to create a good English brand name is a challenge that we face. A good English brand name can not only make a great increase in the sales volume of our products, but also raise the profile of our country. Therefore, how to create good English brand names for our products? This is a big challenge we face and it needs to be solved. We should probe into the English brand names and analyze them in many ways.

To study the English brand names, firstly, we need to learn about brand names. Whether the Chinese brand names or the English brand names, they are both brand names and they have something in common. This paper discusses the principles of brand naming at first. After that, it introduces the several basic types of the English brand names. This paper, from the perspective of the linguistics, respectively analyzes the morphological features, phonological features, rhetorical features and the features of semantic association.

To convey the products' information as much as possible just by short brand names, we need to combine knowledge of many subjects such as phonetics, semantics, psychology and etc. Therefore, it is beneficial for us to know about English brand naming and to create more and more good English brand names for our products.

2. Brief Introduction to Brand Names

Brand name is the nomenclature of commodity in written language. In the Oxford dictionary, the brand name is "the name given to the product by the company that produces it" (Hornby 230). It can be defined as "a distinguishing name or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or

package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors" (Aaker 111). In this part, the principles of brand naming will be touched. Moreover, the basic types of the English brand names will also be explained.

2.1. The principles of brand naming

As an important part of enterprises' products, brand names should be clear and definite so that consumers can remember it easily.

AIDMA (attention, interest, desire, memory, action) which is put forward by advertising scientist E.S Lewis in 1898, represents the process of consumers' psychology (Vestergaard 119). So the principles of brand naming should be formulated on the basis of that.

Easy to remember. One necessary condition for founding a brand is to enable the consumers to have a high cognition of the brand. So in the essence, brand names should be remembered by consumers easily. To achieve this goal, there are several requirements to meet. First, brand names should be short and brief. Most of famous brands are usually short such as Ford, Only and etc. Second, it should be readable. That means the brand names should be easy to pronounce. The producers should avoid using the words that are difficult to pronounce or lack of rhyme. Third, it should be novel. In other words, brand names should be peculiar and creative. It should have characteristics of the times and spirit of innovation. It will emphasize the personality of the brand and expand the difference from the products of the same kind.

Having significance. It means that the brand name itself has meanings. These meanings carry the product information directly or indirectly such as its advantages, performance and benefits to using them. The famous brand of washing powder Tide suggests the efficacy of the product to remove dirt and stains.

Having space of association. The brand names should express or imply function of the products which can inspire the rich imagination of the consumers. In this way, there will be connections between product and consumers which will contribute to brand marketing and market occupation. The milk powder Nestle suggests comfort and attachment just like the birds are taken care of well.

Adapting to the circumstances. Since there are different cultures, customs and languages, the cognition and association of people to the same brand is different from country to country or region to region. Therefore, the brand names should be adapted to the culture values of the target market to avoid misunderstanding among consumers.

2.2. The types of English brand names

There are theoretical basis in forming the brand names. They are created according to the types of merchandise, market as well as the theory of different subjects like aesthetics. In this thesis, the brand names will be analyzed from the four aspects, those are morphology, phonology, rhetoric and semantic association. Brand awareness and sales volume will be bound to be influenced without a international brand name. In the aspect of the range of application, field of use or the number of people, the English can be called the language of the world. It is the common language by which countries exchange and cooperate. As the key element of a brand, a good brand name is the precondition for it to be cognized and accepted by consumers. In English, there is a saying that name is the game, so a good brand name is very important to enterprises. The designers of brand name in western countries rack their brains to launch witty and original brand names to convey merits of products and attract target consumers. Brand names come in many styles.

First, using the names of founders as brand names. There are many examples such as Ford and Disney. There are also some brand names from the names of characters in myths, legends as well as literary works such as Nike and Angle.

Second, using the names of places. Cigarette brand Marlboro is from a street name of London in which a cigarette factory was located. The woolen yarn Cashmere is famous for its producing area Cashmere. The famous brand of makeup Avon is taken from a river by which the great dramatist Shakespeare live.

Third, using the borrowing words. The soap brand LUX derives from Latin. It means sunshine in Latin which enables people to associate sunbath and healthy color of skin with it. The brand "Shampoo" is from Hindi "Champo" which means massage and knead. This Hindi word means correct method for shampooing.

Forth, using the fabricated words. The designers of brand names make up some new words according to a certain intention by the method of word-building or fabricating words without foundation. The famous camera brand Kodak enables consumers to associate it with the moment of pressing shutter.

Fifth, using the common nouns as brand names. It includes figures, nouns, adjectives such as the British cigarette brand 555, the computer brand Apple and sports brand Peak. Some brand words are adjectives which indicate the characteristics and quality of products such as the British insurance company Prudential which indicates the cautious attitude of the company.

3. The Language Features of The English Brand Names

We will study the significant language features of the English brand names when we briefly understand the several basic types of the English brand names. The English brand names have many characteristics. This paper mainly elaborates on the morphological features, phonological features, rhetorical features and the features of semantic association [1]. Besides that, it also has the cultural features.

3.1. Morphological features

Since the English words are made up of letters, they themselves have significant features. The letters can have changes, the words can have combination or reduction, so they have the morphological features.

3.1.1. Reduction

Reduction here refers to shortening. Blending, abbreviation, acronyms and clipping are all included in this category.

Blending is a process of word-formation in which a new word is formed by combining parts of two or more words or a word plus a part of another word, for example, botel (boat+hotel), brunch (breakfast+lunch). There are also some English brand names which are composed in this way. FedEx is the blending form of Federal Express which is a famous express company of the United States; the American battery brand Duracell (durable+cell); the American electronic watches brand Accutron (accurate+electron).

Abbreviations can be divided into three types. The letters represent full words. This is the main type. Example is IOC (International Olympic Committee). The letters represent elements in a compound or just parts of a word, e.g. ID (Identification card). A letter represents the complete form of the first word (or the first two words), while the second word (or the third word) is in full form: e.g. N-bomb (nuclear bomb). In the same way, we can also find abbreviations in English brand words and the first type is very common such as the famous fast food brand KFC which is the abbreviation of Kentucky Fried Chicken, IBM (International Business Machines), the American computer brand HP (Hewlett Packard), GM (general motor) and etc.

Acronyms differ from abbreviations in that they are pronounced as a word rather than as a sequence of letters. Examples of acronyms are: AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), RAM (random access memory). In English brand names, we can also find some abbreviations such as Amoco (American Oil Company); famous tobacco brand Marlboro (man always

remember love because of romance only) and Kent (kiss even never teaches). These brand names always impress consumers who will have much association.

Clipping involves the type of word-formation device in which only part of the stem is retained. There are several types of clipping: the beginning is retained like lab from laboratory; the end is retained like phone from telephone; the middle is retained like flu from influenza; the beginning and the end are retained like maths from mathematics. Among brand names, shortening may be something as elementary as deleting the space and a repeated letter between two words such as the battery brand Eveready (ever+ready) and the American lemon juice brand ReaLemon (real+lemon) [2]. And the first type that the beginning is retained is very common such as the petroleum company Mobil (mobile) and soda water Fanta (fantasy).

3.1.2. Borrowing words

The English language is a composite of many tongues molded into one by the forces of invasion, conquest and cultural interchange. English has always been an insatiable borrower throughout its history. Major sources are Latin, Greek, Scandinavian languages, French, etc. Borrowing not only enlarged the English vocabulary, but also brought about many semantic and stylistic consequences to the whole language. The soap brand Lux takes its name from the Latin which means sunlight. The automobile brand “Volvo” is from the Latin which means rotation and turning.

3.1.3. Compounding words

A compound is a unit consisting of two or more bases. For brand names especially, compounding is a very essential way for making up words which highly expands the range of words. In terms of orthography, compounds comes in the following three forms: solid (homemade), hyphenated (good-looking), open (moon walk). So we can learn that the brand names are also written in the above three forms. The solid forms such as the cleaning product Safeguard (safe+guard), the famous woundplast brand Band-Aid (band+aid) of the Johnson & Johnson's, the British car brand Land Rover (land+rover).

3.1.4. Affixation

Affixation includes prefixation and suffixation. Prefixation is the formation of words with the help of prefixes and the suffixation is the formation of words with the help of suffixes. Affixes that form brand names come in many ways: from the existing affixes in modern English and from classical languages such as Latin and Greek (Ding 44). These affixes can explain the characteristics and functions of products from different aspects. The brand names with prefixes such as the chips Pentium (pent+-ium). The brand names with suffixes such as the battery brand Energizer (energy+-er) and the nail polish Cutex (cuticle+-ex).

3.1.5. Anagrammatic spelling

In fabricated English brand names, anagrammatic spelling is a common and very original way of word-building. It keeps the original pronunciation of the words which are replaced by some letters or groups of letter with the same pronunciation. Therefore, the brand names will keep the obvious relationship with the original words. For instance, the American glasses brand OIC represents “oh I see”, the beverage brand “Kool aid” means cool aid and the diaper brand Luv which have the same pronunciation with the word “love”.

3.2. Phonological features

The phonological features of brand names indicate loud, rhythmical and musical pronunciation. We often find its way in the following two aspects: phonetics and rhythm.

3.2.1. Phonetic features

Most of English brand words are composed of vowels: mainly diphthongs and long vowels or consonants that easy to spell. The brand names composed of these vowels and consonants have

loud and clear pronunciation. At the same time, they are easy to remember and spread. There are a series of examples. The chocolate brand Mars and food brand Heinz are composed of long vowels. The tobacco brand Marlboro and beverage brand Sprite are composed of diphthongs. With regard to consonants, the pronunciation of the letter “K” is loud and clear. So many famous brand names have the letter “K” such as the tobacco Kent and toothpaste Colgate.

3.2.2. Prosodic features

The prosodic features of English brand names are realized by using a series of rhetorical devices like alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia. In this way, brand names can have a harmonious and sprightly rhythm and strong musicality. The food computer chip Intel Inside and the beverage Coca-cola are made up by alliteration which makes them more readable. Sometimes we use the assonance to make the brand names have a kind of music beauty which is a rhetorical device of using the same or similar vowels to make it have a kind of harmonious music beauty [3]. There are some examples such as the beverage brand Fanta, shoe polish Kiwi, toy brand Playmates, shampoo Sanara and so on. Using onomatopoeia can enhance the sense of identity of consumers in psychology and sound effects of brand names. For example, the pronunciation Kodak, a famous camera brand, is just like the sound of pressing shutter. Pepsi simulates the sound of the beverage after opening it and the Tic Tac, a battery-operated toy brand, simulates the sound of toy in operation.

3.3. Rhetorical features

For both sounding and meaning, the English brand naming usually uses some rhetorical devices such as alliteration, metaphor, repetition, exaggeration, synecdoche, onomatopoeia and etc to convey the products’ merits, sprits and quality directly which enables people to strengthen the understanding of the products in the association.

3.3.1. Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of an initial sound, usually of a consonant or cluster, in two or more words of a phrase, line of poetry, etc. in Webster’s New World Dictionary (Webster 305). In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, alliteration is the repetition of the first sound or letter of a succession of words, eg. safe and sound. The main function of alliteration is to enhance the rhythm of the language. Moreover, it can simulate the sounds of many things which makes the language more vivid. The applied range of alliteration is extensive such as poem, speech, lyrics and idiom. There are three sorts of alliteration: vowel repetition of an initial word such as “ignorance is the mother of imprudence”, consonant repetition of an initial word such as “live and learn”, consonant cluster repetition of an initial word such as “sense and sensibility”. We can find its way in advertisement such as the facial cleanser brand Clean Clear, the car brand Rolls-Royce and Coca cola.

3.3.2. Metaphor

Metaphor is very important to the vividness and conciseness of the technique of expression. Metaphor is different from simile in that it is more flexible and vivid than simile and it will use “is” to indicate rhetorical relations rather than “like” or “as”. We can find both tenors and vehicles in metaphor and the typical example of metaphor is “A is B”. But not all sentences connected by “is” are metaphor sentences because there are two conditions to meet: A and B should be the things of different nature; there must be similarities between A and B. Because of the functions of metaphor, it is used extensively in brand names. The woman’s shoes brand Belle which means beauty in English indicates all ladies who wear the Belle shoes are beauties and the clothes brand Only indicates the special of the clothes. From the above discussion, we can see that the metaphor is very important to the English brand names. An ordinary brand name can be full of wit and humor after using the rhetorical device of metaphor. Apart from

that, there are still many other brand names with metaphor. The water heater brand Chant; Clothes brand Youngor.

3.3.3. Repetition

To emphasize a certain meaning and highlight a certain emotion, we usually use the same words or phrases again and again. This rhetorical device is called repetition which is most common in novel and poetry. There are mainly three types of the repetition which are the repetition of words, the repetition of word groups or sentences and the repetition of phrases. Repetition is different from parallelism in that the former is mainly to emphasize the meaning or emotion of the repetitive words or sentences and the latter is not. There are some examples such as perfume brand Amour Amour, cowboy wear Dar & Dar, whiskey Haig & Haig, daily necessities Johnson Johnson and so on.

3.3.4. Exaggeration

Exaggeration can be defined as a rhetorical device that magnifies or narrows the image features of things on the basis of objective facts to enhance the expressive effect. To enlighten the imagination of readers and listeners or strengthen the power of words, we often use the exaggerated words to describe things. The function of exaggeration is to highlight the nature of things and the emotion of authors, to foil atmosphere and to emphasize the mood. Exaggeration can arouse associations of readers who will have a strong resonance with it. In the field of brand names, we can also find some exaggeration to impress customers such as Safeguard and candy brand Life Savers.

3.3.5. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a rhetorical device that is not to say the name of one thing directly but to mention it by expressing other things which have common part with it. There are mainly four kinds of synecdoche: the part represents with the whole, the material with the objects, the abstract with specific and the individual or unit with the whole. To arouse imagination and to make consumers have a camera eye, brand designers usually apply the synecdoche into their design. So we can see many examples of synecdoche in English brand names such as the soap brand Ivory which indicates that people's skin will be very clean just like the ivory and the shampoo brand Head and Shoulders which indicates that people's scurf will gone without leaving it on the head and shoulder [4].

3.3.6. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia means the simulation of the natural sounds. As a rhetorical device, it indicates that use some words similar to a certain natural sound and these words can be cognized and acknowledged by human. In the same way, onomatopoeia is very popular with brand designers. The lip consonants [b] and [v] in Bovril, the powder extra beef produced by English, get its pronunciation voiced and just like the sound of smacking lips when people eat soup. The pronunciation of Kit Kat which is a chocolate brand is the simulation of the sound when people eat chocolate.

3.4. Features of semantic association

By the combination of words, English brand names themselves can convey a certain characteristics and functions of the products or create an artistic conception. This is called semantic association. The former is called direct semantic association while the latter is indirect semantic association.

3.4.1. Direct semantic association

The brand names which have direct semantic association can explain the function and features of the products directly such as facial cleanser brand Clean and Clear and food Delicious. Battery brand Duracell (durable+cell) suggests the durability of products, stop watch Accusplit

(Accurate+split) suggests the accuracy of the watch which explains both the material and the feature of portability of the products. These brand names explain the type and function of products directly so that shorten the time for understanding and make consumers buy products quickly. The brand name of this type mostly are composed by the way of blending and affixation.

3.4.2. Indirect semantic association

The brand names which have indirect semantic association can not explain products' feature and function, but enable consumers to have a good association and associate it with the products. The automobile Mustang reminds people of wild horses running on North American Prairies which is the symbol of speed and strength.

4. Conclusion

Brand names are marks to differentiate products of one company from another used by producers. They are not only propaganda of products, but also they bring customers a sense of reliability. Brand naming is directly related to the production and sales of products. As a result of globalization, English that plays an important role in brand naming has attracted more and more attention. To grasp something regular in brand naming will help us overcome subjectivity and blindness of ourselves and launch our products. By looking up a great quantity of data and material, this thesis analyzes some language features of English brand names. Combined with linguistics, it analyses morphological features, phonetic features and rhetorical features of English brand names. From the aspect of language, it explains the semantic features.

From the above discussion, we can know that it is possible for us to improve the quality of the English brand names which we create for our products. This paper, in some degree, provides some theoretical basis for the English brand naming for our products. That helps us avoid to make some similar mistakes in the history.

As the saying goes, if you know the enemy and know yourself, you need to fear the result of a hundred battles. We study the common types and the outstanding features of the English brand names for our own use. In fact, we have to consider many factors during the process of creating the English brand names such as cultural features. Only if we study and compare the English brand names with our Chinese brand names can we improve the quality of the English brand names we create and our products have a successful sales in the worldwide.

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