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Adapted translation of trademarks



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Many companies after strengthening their position in the national market try to launch their goods and services at the international market in order to attract a wider range of consumers. One of the key aspects of success in such a promotion is an adapted translation of a trademark and some other materials into the language of the country where the company is launching its goods and services.

Traditional translation is usually not suitable for this purpose; as it does not take into account the cultural features and conceptions that may be associated with a literal translation of a trademark in that particular country. This is where adapted translation comes to the scene, for the ease of reference we will only talk about trademarks. Unlike direct translation, which conveys the words and grammatical constructions of the original as accurately as possible, adapted translation focuses on conveying the meaning and idea, and even the philosophy of a company.

What is an adapted translation of a trademark?

Adapted trademark translation is a creative process that takes into account the cultural aspects, values and preferences of the target audience and complies with the linguistic norms of the target country.

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Translator may use various methods, such as: replacing untranslatable elements with similar concepts in the target language; changing the order of words and sentences to ensure a more natural sound; using idioms and phraseological turns of the target language; reducing or adding information to ensure a better understanding of the text.

In general, adapted translation is used in various fields such as: trademark translation, fiction translation, advertising translation, website translation, business documentation translation and subtitling and dubbing.

Why do we need an adapted trademark translation?

- ***To ensure that a trademark is recognized:*** a trademark should be easy to remember and to pronounce in the target language.
- ***To create a positive image:*** a trademark should evoke positive associations with the target audience. The adapted translation should be consistent with the company's values and positioning.
- ***To protect intellectual property:*** the adapted translation of a trademark should be unique and not violate the rights of other companies.

Why is adapted translation so important?

Cultural differences: The culture of the source language may differ significantly from the language into which a trademark is being translated. A direct literal translation may be incomprehensible or even offensive to consumers.

Competition: To stand out from competitors, a trademark must be unique and attractive.

Trust: Adapted translation helps to establish trust with consumers

How is adapted translation of a trademark done?

The process of adapted trademark translation involves following steps:

Analysis: Study of the original trademark, its history, meaning and context of use. Survey of the target market and its cultural features.

Selection of options: Developing several options of the trademark translation, taking into account all the above factors.

Evaluation: Conducting focus groups and other research to assess the perception of the target audience of the different translation options. The results of focus groups may need to be finalized and processed.

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It should be noted that words that may have a negative meaning in another culture should be avoided.

For example, the Coca-Cola Company entered the Chinese market back in the 1920's and the original translation of the trademark was 'Kē kē kěn là', which literally means "tadpole chewing wax". As you can understand, the product with such a name was not popular among consumers. The company organized a competition to find an adapted Chinese name for Coca that would catch on in the market, and after a lot of hard work and several hundred word combinations, the company changed Coca-Cola to Kě Kǒu Kě Lè ("Kokoukole") - which, when broken down into symbols, can be translated as "mouthful of happiness" or "happiness in the mouth"¹²



Selection: Selection of the most suitable translation option that best meets all purposes.

Legal Due Diligence: Checking the selected translation option for compliance with the laws of the target countries and the existence of already registered trademarks. It should be noted that an adapted translation of a trademark helps to protect it from illegal use by the competitors.

Trademark registration: Registration of the selected adapted translation as a trademark in the respective country.

¹ <http://www.umao.ru/news-article/1243--q-q-.html>, www.logrusit.com/ru/blog/localization-of-marketing-materials/

² <https://translation.profalians.com.ua/ru/pochemu-v-kitae-nazvanie-koka-kola-pereveli-kak-kusaj-voskovogo-golovastika/>

Main methods of adapted translation of a trademark:

Transliteration: replacing the letters of the source language with the letters of the target language.

Transcription: replacing the sounds of the source language with the sounds of the target language.

Calque (literal): translation of a word or expression by replacing its components with the corresponding components in the target language.

Meaningful translation: translation based on the conveyance of meaning and idea rather than the exact rendering of words.

Semantic translation: translation of a word or phrase based on its meaning and context.

New name creation: the development of a new trademark that will fulfil all the requirements of an adapted translation.

The choice of adapted translation method depends on various factors such as: linguistic features of the source and target languages, cultural features of the target country, specifics of the product and its target audience, as well as intellectual property rights to the trademark.

We would like to share a case related to an adapted translation, one of our clients wanted to register their trademark in China and before registration they wanted to know how their trademark would sound in the Chinese language. We addressed our partners in China for an adapted translation into the Chinese language of the phrase “five drops”. The request included all the requirements for an adapted translation, such as translation accuracy, good sounding and meaningful translation of the phrase “five drops”. We received three versions of the adapted translation from the Chinese partners. The first option is a calque (literal) translation of the word combination in Chinese, “five drops” – “wu di”. The Chinese colleagues explained that this is a calque, which does not have any negative meaning or sound in the Chinese language. A legal examination was also carried out, which showed that there is no registration of an identical name, but there is a trademark registration for “golden five drops”, which would possibly be an obstacle to trademark registration. As a second option, a transliteration of the phrase “five drops” from English “five drops” was proposed, which when transliterated into Chinese would sound like “fa” “zhuo”. The first characters of the two words were taken, which when combined and translated means “drink when you feel tired”. A third option “Zhuo bo shi” was also proposed, where the semantic translation of the word “drop” was used. This

character is used in many Chinese poems to refer to unfiltered, opaque wine, and “bo shi” has the meaning – “professional, degree”. Semantic translation of these two characters mean “yielded unfiltered wine” and the second character is translated as “for knowledgeable professionals”. The Chinese colleagues added that in the Chinese language these two characters are simple and easy to remember and have no negative meaning. However, if the client does not like the translation of the first character – “unfiltered, turbid” it can be replaced with another character, which would mean “pour wine”.

Adapted trademark translation is a complex task that requires not only linguistic knowledge, but also a deep understanding of cultural aspects and marketing strategies.

In some cases, a simple transliteration or transcription may be sufficient, while other cases may require a more comprehensive approach such as creating a new brand name³.

Adapted trademark translation is an important tool that helps companies to increase trademark recognition, increase sales of their products, strengthen the company’s position in a competitive market and prevent legal issues associated with the use of trademarks.

It is important to note that an adapted trademark translation should be prepared by experienced professionals in this field. Only an experienced translator will be able to take into account all the aspects and choose the best option that will meet all the targets.

We will be always happy to help you with professional adapted translation in any languages of CIS countries and non-CIS countries.

Write to us at: Info@BolotovIP.com

³ Check for example: <https://www.zakon.kz/stati/4826585-registratsiya-tovarnogo-znaka-v-kitae.html>